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HOMELY TALES

WITH YOUNG MEN

ON THE YOUNG MEN OF THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS

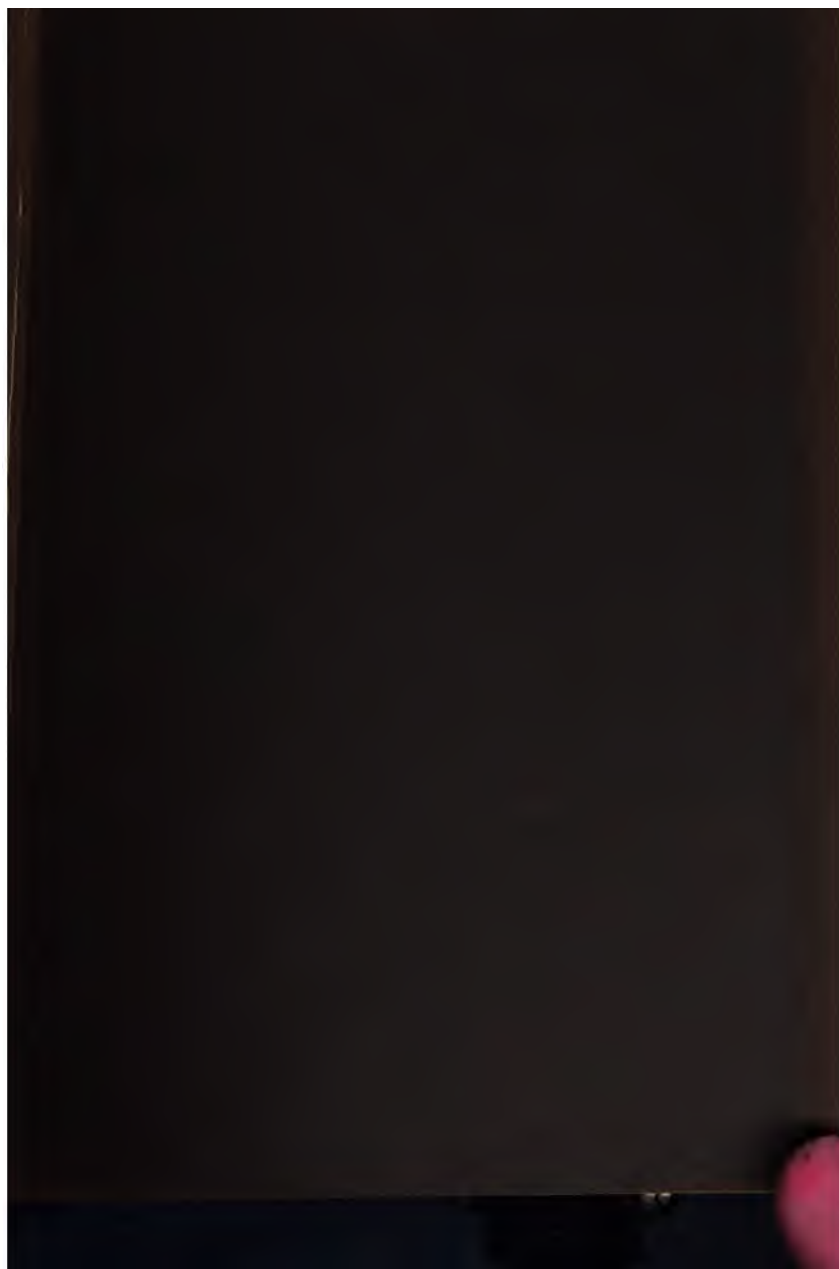
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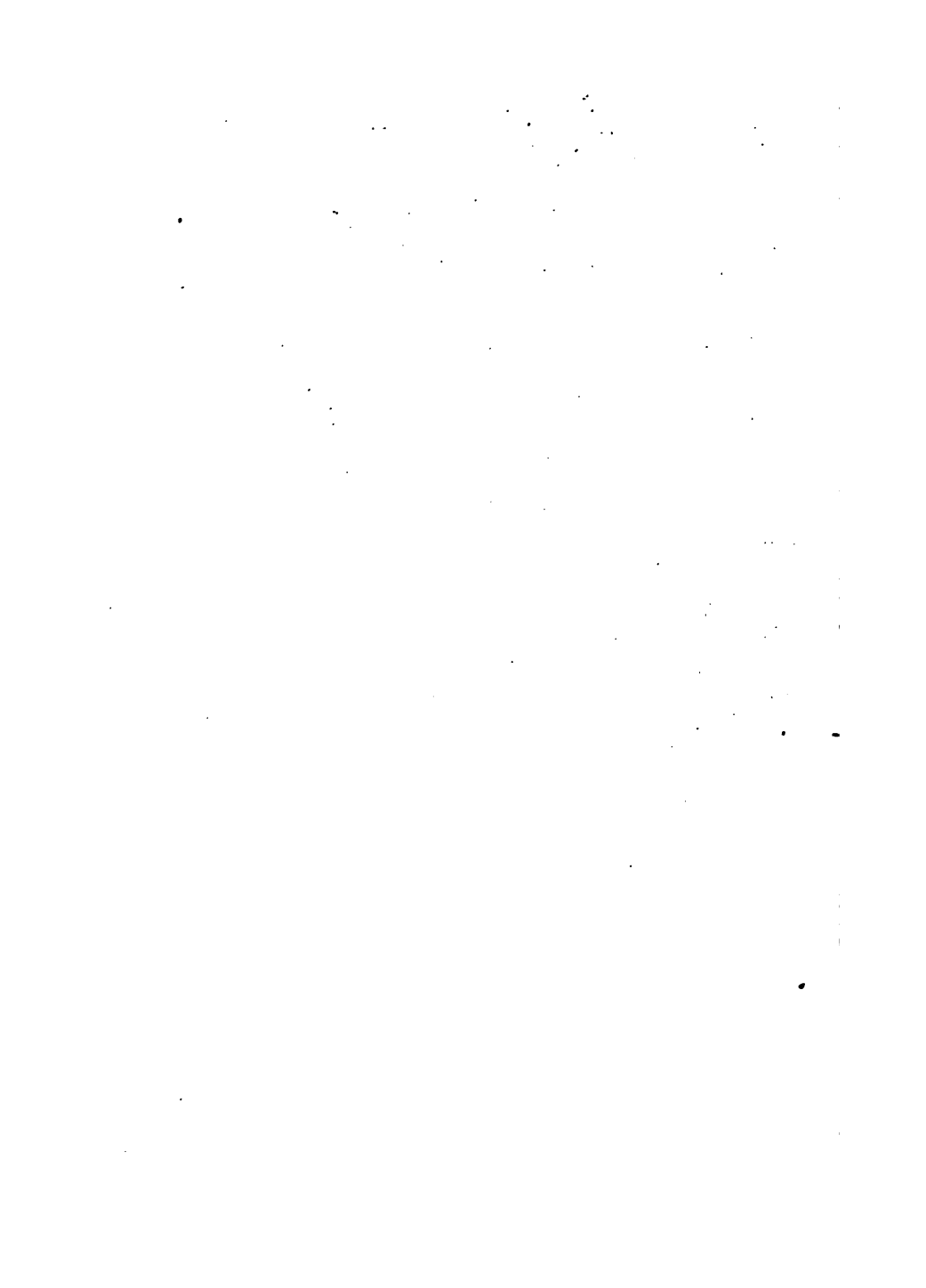
THE REV. CANON WESTCOTE, D.D.



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HOMELY TALKS.

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HOMELY TALKS

*WITH YOUNG MEN ON THE YOUNG MEN
OF THE BIBLE.*

First Series.

OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

*"JOINED TO AN IDOL," "KEEPING THE VOW,"
"WINNIE'S DIFFICULTIES," &c. &c.*

WITH A PREFACE BY

THE REV. CANON WESTCOTT, D.D.

LONDON:

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1885.

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TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE
YOUNG MEN'S GUILD OF THE CHRISTIAN BANNER
I affectionately Dedicate
THESE HOMELY TALKS,
WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR THEM—MY FORMER PUPILS,
AND ALWAYS FRIENDS.



PREFACE.

THIS little volume needs no word of introduction. The Addresses which it contains received a warm welcome from "the pupils and friends" for whom they were first written; and it is natural that those who felt that they met their own wants should desire to obtain for them a wider audience. The author has indeed a keen insight into the thoughts and feelings of the young men among whom she has laboured long with winning devotion, a living sympathy with their difficulties, and a directness of illustration and language which combine to give her counsels a peculiar force. At the same time, the mode of treatment which she has applied to familiar narratives discloses in them a fresh meaning. We are led to regard the records of the Old Testament as *written* in a most practical sense *for our learning*. We see how the heroes of the history of a Divine discipline were *men of like passions with ourselves*; how the essential power of great virtues

and great faults finds a place in our common life ; how we can gain strength and guidance from past experience under temptations which only change their outward form as the world grows older ; how from first to last God is fashioning men *made in His image* towards the realisation of His *likeness*.

In this aspect it is a gain to the breadth and vigour of our religious convictions to be taught (for example) that the choice of Lot (p. 16), and the love of Jacob (p. 43), and the patience and patriotism of Moses (pp. 83-86), and the sorrows of Samuel (pp. 143-145), and the self-denial of David (pp. 202-206), and the purity of Daniel (pp. 292, 293), and the noble shame of Ezra (p. 298), find applications in the circumstances of our own lives. So it is that, by the help of the prophetic interpretation of human experience which Scripture offers to us, we come to understand a little better than before that we too are engaged in a present spiritual conflict, struggling or yielding, consciously or unconsciously, in a far-reaching warfare of unseen forces of good and evil. The veil, as it were, is lifted from the surface of things, and we are allowed to gaze for a moment upon those divine realities which lend to the transitory storms of human sorrow and effort and suffering their solemn and beneficent significance.

For the patient and vital study of the Bible,

which these Addresses are designed to encourage, seems to me to have a special importance in the present trial of our faith. Such study brings home to us, as nothing else can do, the vastness of the scale on which God is pleased to work, the infinite long-suffering with which He trains His people, the marvellous unity which marks the fulfilment of His counsel in all its *many parts and many fashions*, the correspondences and fore-shadowings which present scenes and persons widely separated in time and place and circumstance as harmonious elements in one whole, and the majestic progress with which events move towards the presence of the Incarnate Lord. And he who has thus been enabled to feel that the Spirit of Christ spoke in old time and speaks still, will be able to *win his soul in patience* while he waits without anxiety for every result which criticism and observation can establish as to the records and the methods of the Divine teaching. In this way we recover with a calm certainty the experience of the childly ages of the world and of our own childhood. The *eyes of our heart are opened*, and we know that God can now hold converse with men. That is the lesson which we have to learn in this generation even through apparent losses. The WORD is indeed ever with His servants; but when the three children were cast into the furnace of fire, then, we read,

a fourth was seen with them like the Son of God. Our fiery trial will become a blessing if it brings us the clear vision of Him who was dead and is alive for evermore standing in the midst of His Churches.

We need, more perhaps than believers at any earlier time, to meditate with unhastening and un-resting labour on the Scriptures of the Old Testament, on the training of men, and the training of "the people" which it reveals, *that we may have hope. These things happened unto our fathers by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.*

May these Addresses help those who read them to feel the presence of the Spirit sent in Christ's Name in the course of simple duties, and to obey His living Voice.

B. F. WESTCOTT.

CAMBRIDGE, *Eve of the Annunciation*, 1885.

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TALK I.



C A I N.

UNBELIEF THE ROOT OF ALL SIN.

EXAMPLE and the power of influence are wonderful things, and yet, as is the case with most of the wonderful things that are common, we seldom think much about them, just because they are common. We do not often pause to think seriously about the air we breathe and the water we drink, although we know that health and even life are powerfully affected by both these elements. The health, and perhaps even the life of our souls and minds are quite as powerfully affected by good or evil examples of mental and moral conduct, as our bodies are by fresh or foul air, and by pure or impure water. In one sense example is a more powerful agent than air and water, because their effect ceases with the human, earthly life of each person, but that of the former does not cease at death. People who live in the present age are strongly influenced by the thoughts and actions of men and women who lived on the earth thousands of years ago. Not only

by the mysterious law whereby vices and virtues have become hereditary in families, are succeeding generations of men influenced by past generations, but also by the mere knowledge of the actions of dead persons, not related to them by blood or by natural affinity.

Men and women living at this moment are nearly as much influenced by the men and women of the past, as they are by the companions and associates present with them in the flesh; and, solemn though this fact is, there is one more solemn still, the fact that *we in our turn* will affect for good or evil, generations yet unborn. Do not try to shut the eyes of your mind to this fact, nor try to forget it, because of its fearful solemnity. Let that solemnity but stir you to holier and nobler living; to never-ceasing remembrance that as you cannot *live* alone, neither can you *sin* alone, nor do well alone. You cannot sin without harming some souls now, and countless souls in the ages to come; and you cannot "do justly," and "love mercy," and "walk humbly with your GOD" without benefiting souls born and unborn. No! thanks be to GOD *you cannot*, for that is the bright, comforting side of this most solemn truth.

Human influence being, then, so powerful in its effects, is it any wonder that the Christian Catholic Church, in all its Branches, teaches us to think

often of the saints of God, to commemorate them with public prayer and praise, and to give thanks to their God and our God, that being "encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses," we are the better enabled to "run with patience the race that is set before us" ?

Although we are, as I have said, most surely influenced for good or evil by all men and women,—by those living here, and those living amongst the departed spirits,—yet some persons are more strongly affected by one kind of example, and others by another kind. Women, naturally, are more affected for good or evil by the actions and recounted deeds of women; men by those of men; children by those of children. You, as young men, should have your thoughts frequently turned to the young men whose lives were written down in the Bible for your benefit, in order that you should follow their example when good and righteous, and avoid it when evil.

Therefore it is that I should like to talk with you about the prominent men of the Bible, and more especially the prominent young men, taking some of them as warnings, and some as patterns whereby you may mould your own characters and guide your own actions.

The young men to whom I wish first to direct your thoughts belong to the former class, and should

be to you as warnings; for they are Cain, the first murderer, and Lot.

Perhaps some of you may be thinking, "What! Cain! He stands too far off in his black wickedness to be even a *warning* to me: he was a murderer. I do not need to be warned against murdering my brother." Others amongst you who remember more closely what you have been taught, know that Cain thought many a wrong thought, and did many a wrong act, before he sank to that lowest deep of crime, the crime of murder, before he branded himself for all time with the brand of the first manslayer. Some of you who are accustomed to examine your own hearts, and who have some little insight into the true nature of sin—into its subtle, almost hidden beginnings, and its swift but stealthy growth,—will believe that good-tempered and kindly-natured though you may be, and "unwilling to hurt a fly," as the saying is, there are in your hearts the seeds of the sin of murder; and you will know that it is your duty to cast out those seeds, even though, through the goodness and love of God, they are not *likely* to develop into that deadly and terrible crime.

We all know that the immediate causes of the murder of Abel were the envy and jealousy which Cain felt towards him; but these evil passions themselves had their root in something deeper still

—in unbelief, that sin which is the fruitful mother of all other sins. Cain had no faith; he did not, and would not try to see the promised Redeemer of mankind in the sacrifice of the slain lamb which he had been commanded to offer, and because he did not choose to believe, he would not obey: not content with omission of duty, he added thereto the commission of actual disobedience, and offered to GOD an offering which was of no value, because the offerer had not first been purged from sin by the shedding of blood in the appointed sacrifice, typical of the *Blood* which was ever, in anticipation, being shed for the atonement of the world.

The human heart is so constituted that it cannot be happy in a state of unbelief and disobedience; therefore Cain was not happy, and out of this restless unhappiness sprang envy and jealousy; he envied Abel's gladness of heart, and the favour with which GOD regarded him.

It is a sin to feel envious of the wealth and worldly prosperity of our fellow-men; it is a greater sin to envy their mental gifts; but it is an immeasurably evil thing to feel jealous of their spiritual attainments and their peace with GOD; yet, can we be quite sure that we never fall into this most terrible crime? Does not some ill-tempered, morose-natured person often say bitterly of some 'sunny-natured, cheery-souled companion, "Ah! it is easy enough for *him*

to be good and religious, GOD has given him such a temper that nothing worries him, or puts him out of his way?" Or worse still, has not one heard such words as these—"Yes, so-and-so is religious; it is quite easy to him, he loves Bible-reading and psalm-singing, and church-going, whereas I don't care about them; they are a delight to him, but they are a weariness to me, a duty to be got through somehow, so he is ever so much better off than I am."

Thoughts and words like these breathe the very spirit of Cain, of whom the gentle, loving-hearted St. John could write that he "was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him?" St. John goes on to ask. "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." He knew that his works were evil, and yet he did not try to mend them; he knew that his brother's works were righteous, and he but envied him his righteousness, instead of imitating it; and herein the people of whom I spoke just now resemble Cain—the people who grumble about their faults and envy the good qualities of their neighbours, without doing anything to imitate the one or to avoid the other.

Is it not possible to grumble even to GOD Himself about our sins? even to pray to Him in a complaining, unbelieving spirit; to pray, and all the time think, that there is very little good in prayer, and that as one has not yet been answered,

one never will be answered? If any one of us feel in his heart that thus it has been with him, let him remember the end of Cain, and set himself resolutely to root out this faithless, unloving doubt of his Heavenly FATHER's love.

About the bad temper of which we spoke a little while ago—there *are* bad-tempered people in the world, many of them, and some are good enough sort of folk in other ways, so that this matter of a disagreeable temper is a matter really worth thinking about. First, I wish you to recollect that to a certain extent temper depends upon natural constitution, and that whilst one person is born with a sweet, sunny temper, another has naturally a gloomy and morose disposition, or a fiery, easily-irritated temper, in the same way as one man is born with blue eyes and fair hair, and another with dark eyes and dark hair.

You feel a little puzzled, perhaps, about this, and knowing that a man cannot change the colour of his eyes nor the shape of his nose, you may perhaps feel tempted, as Cain was, to throw the blame of your bad, nasty temper upon God, and to say, "He made such and such a person good-tempered, why didn't He make me the same?" Wait a moment, and try if you cannot find a natural, reasonable explanation of this. It is a sad truth, but still a truth, sad though it be, that

GOD cannot do with us quite as He would do. Because of the sin of our first parents, and the sins of the succeeding generations, we are tainted with sin, and having through our forebears gone astray, GOD cannot have entirely His own will concerning us. Evil tempers and vices are as surely inherited as are the physical features characteristic of different races and families, and GOD suffers it to be so, is compelled, we may say, to suffer it to be so, because He will not set aside the natural law of certain consequences following of necessity upon certain actions.

GOD created man with free will to be His friend and child, not His slave; and man used this free will to choose evil and to commit sin, and GOD in the justice of His nature cannot alter the natural consequences of that free choice; but as for every other natural punishment of man's sin the love of GOD has found an alleviation, so also for this. Trying and painful though ill-temper or any other vice may be to its possessor, there is to the thoughtful Christian heart an alleviation in the constant struggle against it. Idleness has no part in GOD's plan of life for us: He abhors idleness and loves work. He loves that we should labour for Him, and it is indeed comforting to know that in subduing any evil temper, any inherited vice, we are doing real and effective work for Him; for, with His SPIRIT inspiring and aiding us, we are aiming at

becoming more like Himself, and are regaining for ourselves, and for generations yet to come, more features of the glorious Image in which man was at the first created. It may be hard work, nay, it *is* hard, painful work, this striving against sin, but we do it for love of a FATHER and a Friend, and it is holy, beautiful, ennobling work. Remember, he "loveth much who has been forgiven much," and the sorer the struggle, the more glorious will be the victory, the sweeter the sure reward.

Let thoughts such as these comfort those who are heavily laden and sorely tried by inherited ill-temper, and help them to avoid the sin of envying the righteous works of their seemingly more favoured brethren; seemingly, I say advisedly, because even a sweet, pliable, bright temper may have its drawbacks. Persons blessed with such are often too easily led by the solicitations of companions into sins of other kinds; also many amongst such are given to over-much talking, and frequently, in the very eagerness of their desire to be pleasant to every one, and to sustain their own reputation for good temper, are tempted to the use of insincere and exaggerated language.

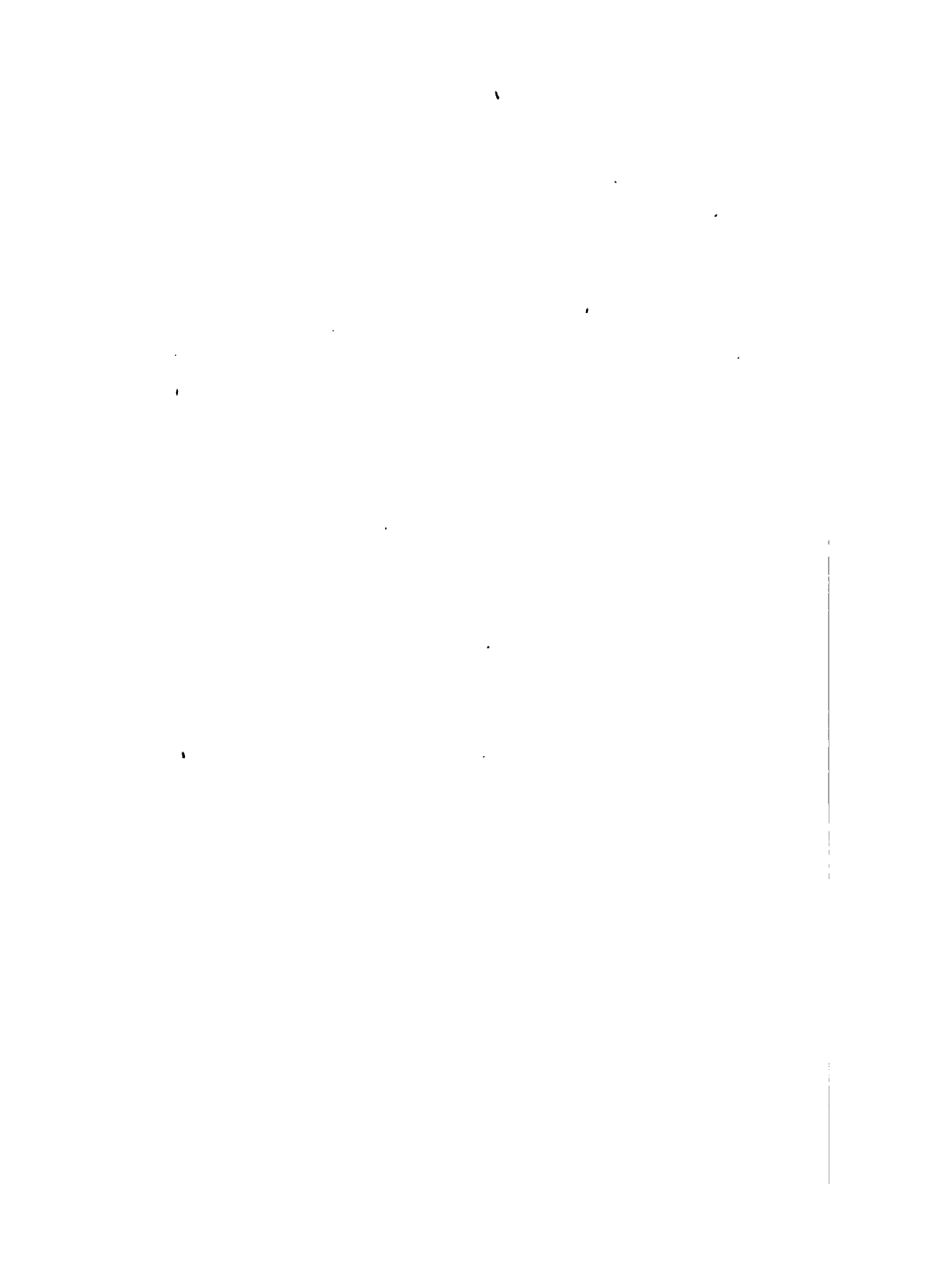
To return to the history of Cain. He had full opportunity given him for doing better. God Himself condescended to speak with him, and to give him counsel. God told him that if he did well he

should be accepted, and though he told him that "sin lay at his door," crouching like a wild beast, ready to spring upon his unguarded moment, yet He also told him that he *could* conquer even that venomous and malignant beast: "Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." And to us the same lesson is given in other and plainer words by St. James: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from thee." Cain would not accept GOD's loving counsel; he would not try to conquer sin, and would not seek in faith to offer the true and appointed sacrifice. Alas! do we never do as he did?

Sacramental grace is ever within our reach, and often and often we will have none of it. We would rather continue to envy our brother's good works than seek by penitence and prayer to conquer the evil beast lying at the door of our hearts.

Avoid, then, the sins of the young man Cain: his unbelief, his envy of his brother's righteousness, his violent anger, and above, and more than all, his self-willed rejection of the remedy whereby his heart could have been cleansed from sin, and made holy as the heart of Abel.

TALK II.



LOT.

THE EVIL RESULTS OF SELF-LOVE.

At the beginning of our last talk I said that Lot, as well as Cain, should be regarded by you as a warning—a beacon pointing to sins to be avoided. He was no murderer; he was even a man of whom in his later years it was said that he had “a righteous soul.”

With his conduct in his later years, in either its good or its bad points, we have—for our present purpose—nothing to do. I wish to dwell upon one prominent trait of his character in his comparatively young days, and that was his selfishness. After having lived many years together, it became necessary that Lot and his uncle Abraham should part company, and go each a different way. The choice of the way was kindly and generously given by the elder man to his nephew Lot. And how did Lot requite him for this generous dealing? “He lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere . . . even as the garden of

the LORD ; . . . then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan."

He chose the very best, leaving to Abram, who probably had larger flocks, and more need of rich and abundant pasturage, inferior and less fertile land. In the end, as we all know, that selfish choice of Lot's wrought him much woe, and the loss of all that he had of worldly wealth; and even before that terrible end came, his mind and heart suffered greatly from the evil state of the society amongst which, for the sake of worldly gain, he had chosen to live. Now how may this conduct of Lot affect *us*, people of the present day, and be to us as a warning lesson?

In this age, and in the present over-stocked state of the population, when the supply of every sort of service and labour is far greater than the demand, when places have to be almost fought over, and men and women jostle each other, and often trample upon one and another in the sore struggle to obtain daily bread, it is indeed terribly difficult to avoid the sin of selfishness; it is even difficult to judge as to what is and is not selfishness, for undoubtedly it is a duty to use every honest means, not only for obtaining a mere livelihood, but also to improve one's fortunes, and rise to higher work, and the rewards which wider and higher work deserves.

Very far indeed is it from my wish to say a word that might damp your lawful ambition. A young man who does not wish to rise in the world is scarcely worthy of being called a man. A character that is without aspiration is either that of one whom God has deprived of the light of reason, or of one mentally and morally worthless; but all this being granted, there still remains the question as to the avoidance of selfishness in the hard struggle to push onwards and rise upwards in life.

It seems to me that we can make certain safeguards for ourselves in this struggle, such as close, scrupulous care to preserve fairness in our competition, whatever may be its nature—care not only not to “take a mean advantage,” as it is called, but also not to press a rival overmuch, not even as much as the letter of the law would allow. Sometimes, when we know that a certain person really needs a situation or a prize more than we need it, and we feel that without injury to any relations dependent upon us we could let the chance slip by us for the sake of that more needy person, let us make that sacrifice, and thus be, in some small measure, partakers with Him “Who for our sakes became poor.”

Again, let us always think more highly, more prizeingly of the work itself, whatever it may be,

in which we are engaged (provided always that it be honest work) than its possible rewards. The reward is not the real honour and glory; those lie with the struggle, and the toil, and the fight. No one thinks that Arthur Wellesley was great because he was Duke of Wellington, but because of the brave and noble work which made a grateful sovereign and nation bestow upon him the high social honour of a dukedom.

It is well to keep in our minds as an unfailing rule, the absolute duty of giving, according to our means, to the service of our GOD, in aiding the adornment of His sanctuaries, the spread of His gospel, and the softening and improving the condition of His poor. If, with increasing means, there be enlarged giving, there will be the less fear of selfish grasping at riches and undue engrossment therein. Another safeguard is to be found in the desire that one's work should be of use to other people as well as of being of benefit to oneself.

There are some vocations which are eminently unselfish. Those of the medical man and the chemist, of the fireman and policeman, will at once recur to every mind; that also of the soldier, whose profession sets him apart as the helper of the helpless, the defender of the defenceless: he has to take his own life in his hands to save many lives, and to forget self in care for the in-

terests of his sovereign and his fellow-countrymen. Above all, there is the vocation of the Priest, between whose training and duties and those of the soldier there is great resemblance. Both are, (as it were) the "servant of servants," the pledged helpers of the helpless; the difference is but in the modes of rendering the service. All these are pre-eminently vocations of unselfishness; but in every business of life there is room for the remembrance of the things of others as well as of the things of self.

I must touch for a moment upon higher ground. There are persons singled out to make grand, heroic sacrifices for GOD and their fellow-men, and those who are thus moved by the Spirit of GOD to lofty service dare not resist their vocation, dare not hesitate to make the great sacrifice. Other men admire and reverence these grandly devoted souls who have given their all to GOD, though they do not feel called upon to follow them to the full extent of their self-renunciation. Sir Philip Sidney's last act of life—the relinquishment of the longed-for draught of cold water to the needs of a wounded soldier who might recover and live—was grandly beautiful; it was what every one of us in his best moods would wish to imitate, and yet I think we should remember that though to have done it was truly noble, not to have done it

could not have been called ignoble, or even faulty. Sir Philip was one of the "high souls" that come in view but seldom in an age, and yet he must have trained himself to his lofty height by daily exercise in small self-denials, and in the observance of small kindnesses.

One practical warning given to us by Lot's selfish choice I would wish now to dwell upon. He deliberately chose to live amongst the ungodly, the heathen, for the sake of his own mere worldly aggrandisement; and in consequence of that selfish choice his own character became deteriorated, and he ultimately lost all for which he had risked his soul's health.

Is not the lesson obvious? If, in the course of your life, it should happen that two paths lie before you, one of them more flowery and inviting looking than the other, and yet the more likely of the two to lead you away from God and His service, then "be strong, quit you like men," and deliberately but ungrudgingly make choice of the less pleasant, the more difficult road.

To drop metaphor and come to plain matter of fact, let us suppose that two situations may be open to your acceptance, the one of them with high pay, and various worldly advantages, but in a place where there is no church of your own communion, or where you would have to live amongst ungodly

persons, and be exposed to the constant sight of ungodly practices; the other, offering less money-payment, and fewer chances of worldly advancement, but in a neighbourhood where you could enjoy all the spiritual privileges of the Branch of CHRIST'S Catholic Church into which you were baptized, and where you would have the society of GOD-fearing, GOD-loving people. If such a turning-point in life should ever come to any one of you, for GOD'S sake be not like unto Lot; choose not "the well-watered plain," but choose deliberately, ungrudgingly, as did Moses, to "suffer affliction with the people of GOD rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

This counsel may seem hard. I cannot help that; it is true counsel. Because of sin, the original sin which has tainted all the history of mankind, the service of GOD must sometimes be hard; and indeed, if there were no hardness, I think that it would be a service hardly worth rendering to our GOD. Surely, we would not wish to give Him that which "costs us nothing." You are doubly pledged to endure hardness as good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST, to choose, for love of your Captain and your King, the less pleasant, less easy paths of life, if they be likely to lead away from Him; and (here comes the blessedness of our high service), though the choice of right and the refusal of wrong is hard, is pain-

ful, when once the deliberate choice has been made, peace comes *with* the choice; when once the yoke of servitude has been willingly, even though with suffering, put on our necks, we find that, after all, it "is easy;" and when the burden has been lifted into our arms, we find that it "is light;" for it is His yoke and His burden, the yoke and the burden of Him whose "banner over us is *Love*."

TALK III.

I S A A C.

THE BLESSED LESSON OF SELF-ABEGNATION.

IF Lot be a warning to us against selfishness, we may surely look upon Isaac as an example of something more than mere unselfishness of heart and action; rather of rare *denial*—nay, we may truly say of an *annihilation*—of self. Possibly you have been accustomed to think so much of Abraham in the offered sacrifice of Isaac as to have lost sight of the younger man's share in that grandly heroic act; but, as you are young men, I wish you to think to-day less of the old man Abraham than of the young man Isaac, and I wish you to try to find out wherein the conduct of the latter (in the most remarkable episode of his life) may be used as a profitable example for yourselves.

I am inclined to believe that some of you may think that circumstances so singular, so unlike anything which our modern life can, or indeed *ought*, to present, can, after all, have very little practical use or value for young men of this eminently practical nineteenth century. You have read and heard the story over and over again:—How God called Abra-

ham, and without giving any reason for the seemingly cruel command, bade him take his son, his only son Isaac, and offer him in sacrifice upon a mountain of which He would tell him.

In hearing and reading the story, you may have thought—and, to a certain extent, thought truly—that such a command could not have been given save in those far-away, early ages of faith, in the childhood of the world, when men lived in closer intercourse with GOD, and when it seemed good to the all-wise GOD to lead and train men by different modes from those whereby He chooses now to train and lead them. Were a man in these days to say to his son that he had been commanded by GOD to offer him up in sacrifice, the son would be fully justified in considering that his poor father had lost the light of reason, and in taking every means of defending his life from the attack of a madman.

All this being true, you may imagine that, after all, the old-world story cannot be of any use to you; but if you be tempted to entertain such a thought, it is your duty to dismiss it from your mind, for are we not taught that “GOD has caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning,” and that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is *profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”? Abraham, in obeying that strange com-

mand, showed the heroic faith which in all the circumstances and trials of our modern mode of life we also ought to endeavour to show. Isaac, in submitting to his father's will, was no coward, no "muff," to use a term much in vogue amongst you modern boys, but a true hero in his obedience, and a noble partner in his father's noble self-abnegation. Isaac might, and could have acted otherwise; he was young and strong; his father was aged and comparatively infirm; the younger man could easily have obtained a physical victory over the elder; and although sons of all ages were at that period kept in complete subjection to their parents, the extreme strangeness of this action of his father Abraham would have rendered resistance on the part of Isaac not so heinous a crime as, under ordinary circumstances, disobedience would have been considered.

How would Lot have acted had he been placed in such circumstances? The man who could deliberately choose for himself the better-watered and richer land, leaving to his uncle the inferior portion, would assuredly not have submitted himself to the sacrificial knife. It is the *spirit* of Isaac, then, the spirit of holy obedience, that you should endeavour to obtain, although his act was one that can never be required of you. He had the spirit of submission to constituted authority, and of self-renunciation.

How, in this century, can you, young men, put the goodly graces of submission and self-renunciation to practical use? That is the question of chief import in our thoughts to-day. Some of you are sons who have one or both of your parents alive; and in your case your first and highest social duty is owing to your parents. Wherever and whenever it is possible for you to give them full obedience, give it with the ungrudging readiness of Isaac. Whenever you can sacrifice self for their sake, to promote their comfort and welfare, without neglecting any higher claim that GOD's especial service may have upon you, then sacrifice self, and endeavour to do so in the un murmuring spirit with which Isaac of old sacrificed self.

In another and higher sense, all of you, whether you have living earthly parents or not, are sons—the sons of GOD, and of your spiritual mother the Church of your baptism. Are you always alive to the calls of God and of the Church? Do you always show the unhesitating faith and ready obedience of Isaac? By these questions I mean, are all the doctrines of the Church honestly and steadfastly believed? all its rules, whether agreeable or otherwise, strictly and un murmuringly obeyed? I leave these practical questions with you; no one can know as well as you yourselves do wherein you fail of attainment to the holy spirit

of obedience which actuated the young man Isaac, and how far you endeavour to cultivate it in your hearts and lives.

The SPIRIT of GOD, that cannot lie or give an unfair estimate of any character, has shown us in the after-records of Isaac's life that in one trial at least he did not act up to his grand beginning. He who could submit himself to the sacrificial knife, who could courageously meet death in one of its most terrible forms, had not the moral courage to tell the truth concerning his wife Rebekah, lest he should be slain for her sake.

Is not this, to a certain extent, the case with many of us? We can occasionally, two or three times perhaps, in our lives, perform some great, heroic action for God and our fellow-men—resist some mighty temptations, fight some fierce battles, and come off victors; and yet are not on our guard day by day, and are not keenly watchful for opportunities of showing small kindnesses, of doing simple homely duties, and of resisting *comparatively* little sins. We kill the lion and the bear of some fierce onslaught of Satan, and yet take no trouble to slay the foxes, “the little foxes that steal the grapes.”

Although Isaac failed in holy courage in the matter of Rebekah, and appears to have been somewhat given to indulgence in the matter of eating,

we do see throughout his whole life the influence and effects of the one heroic, self-forgetting obedience of his youth. It solemnised and chastened him, so that he seems ever to have led a quiet and withdrawn life. "He went forth to pray in the fields at eventide;" and we cannot fail to notice that, in an age when polygamy was at least tolerated and suffered, Isaac contented himself with one wife. Some such chastening effect any serious illness, any bereavement, or any great personal disappointment which has involved a *sacrifice of self* should have upon each of us modern Christians. No one of these events ought to pass over us without leaving its abiding mark for *good* upon our innermost feelings and our outward actions, leaving us more chastened, more sober, more self-denying, and more holy.

It is necessary that we should now ascend to higher ground, and that we should meditate for a little while on the typical teachings of Isaac's character. We have often talked together of the mystical meanings of most of the Old Testament; and I have reminded you that every sacrifice, every detail of the Tabernacle ceremonies, and even of its furniture, was directly typical of the MAN CHRIST JESUS, the one Central Figure of Humanity; and that each foreshadowed some particular feature in His life or work. As, then, we know that the lower

animals, and even material things,—when both were, by Divine appointment, religiously used,—had these mystical meanings, it is easy for us to realise that men, the highest beings of the animal kingdom, might, in some points of their lives and characters, shadow forth and be as types of the one perfect MAN, in whom, although very Man, “dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD *bodily*.”

Holy and learned men of the Christian dispensation have ever been wont thus to use the lives of Isaac and Joseph, Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, and many others of the old dispensation; and the Church has set her official seal to the acknowledgment of Isaac as a direct type of our blessed LORD by her choice of the story of his willing sacrifice of himself in compliance with his father's command as the First Lesson for GOOD FRIDAY, the day on which she most specially commemorates the willing sacrifice of JESUS.

The type must of necessity fall short of the thing typified, be ever fainter in colour, smaller in value, and inferior in beauty. Thus it was that for Isaac a substitute was found, but that for the blessed JESUS was there “no ram caught in the thicket by its horns.” The blood of Isaac was not spilt, but the BLOOD of JESUS was shed for the “remission of sins, for the redemption of the world.” Yet in the willingness to offer him-

self to GOD, Isaac was no unworthy, but rather a noble and beautiful type of Him who *of His own will* gave up the ghost, and died that men might live. In asking you, then, to think of Isaac, we of necessity ask you to think of CHRIST, to go upwards and onwards, through the frail, imperfect type, to contemplation of the DIVINE MAN, the one all-perfect Pattern, and, with fuller and deeper knowledge than Isaac had, to follow the CHRIST who *has come*, and who is now with us in and by His sacraments, with the faith and willing zeal with which Isaac and other holy men of old followed the CHRIST, Who for them was yet *to come* in the flesh, but Whom "*they saw*" in the sacrifices appointed of GOD. How and in what way can you follow your great Example? In answer, I leave with you, as being especially connected with the subject we have been contemplating, these words, full of meaning for every possible event of life—

"HE PLEASED NOT HIMSELF."

TALK IV.



ESAU AND JACOB.

USE AND ABUSE OF OPPORTUNITIES.

FROM the general conduct of the twin brothers Esau and Jacob we can learn noteworthy lessons as to the use and abuse of opportunities. Esau despised what Jacob valued. Esau, by his own fault, lost his rightful inheritance. Jacob, on the other hand, constantly strove to obtain more than by natural and legal right belonged to him.

Both men were faulty; but Esau infinitely more faulty than Jacob, for the motive-power that actuated Jacob was good; his desire was to do the will of God; his error lay in trying to do the will of God after his own human fashion, and in trying to further the accomplishment of the Divine purposes by merely human machinery, and at the times and seasons which seemed most convenient and suitable in his own eyes. Nevertheless he owned God as God. God was in many of his thoughts, if not in all of them, and he believed, to a certain extent, in His promises; not to the full extent to which holy faith can reach, or he would have left the

carrying out of those promises to Him who had made them, and not have attempted to take the work of fulfilling them into his own hands. Jacob, then, had faith and a high motive-power; but Esau had neither. Esau cared not for GOD, had no faith in His revelations, and instead of being governed and guided by any high unseen aim and object, allowed himself to be drifted hither and thither, the prey of circumstances, and guided only by the impulse of the passing moment.

Now do not let yourselves imagine that Esau could not help himself, that he could not avoid the faults into which he fell. Because GOD had foretold to Rebekah that her younger son would be greater and more blessed than the elder, you may perhaps be tempted to think that Esau had less chance of doing right than Jacob had; but so it could not be, for GOD never has, and never will, tempt any man to do evil; and where He has not given an equal opportunity, He does not expect an equal use. Where He has not given the same amount of talents, He does not look for an equal return. But in the case of these brothers the opportunity was equal; nay, Esau's chance was even greater than Jacob's, for he was in possession of the birthright, and needed not to have lost it. He was born the elder son, and need not have forfeited the privileges of his eldership. All this we

know from the New Testament, wherein Esau is called "a profane person," who "for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." If he could not have avoided his sin, if it had been in any, even human sense of the word, "forced on him by circumstances," he would not have been styled in Holy Writ a "profane person," the meaning of which is that he regarded not GOD, and had no fear of Him before his eyes.

He had a finer opportunity of being GOD's faithful servant than even Jacob had, and he recklessly abused that grand opportunity, even as GOD in His foreseeing wisdom had known that he would do, and yet, knowing that, had given him the fullest possible chance, and, *in creating* him the elder son, gave him all the privileges and advantages of the position. And Esau sold these—in selling his birthright, a foolish act under any circumstances, but in the case of a patriarch of those olden times it was more than foolish, it was culpable.

If in these days the eldest son of some great nobleman could sell, for some passing gratification, the inheritance of estates and titles which would in natural course be his at his father's death, his fellow-men would consider him not only foolish, but blameworthy in relinquishing opportunities of usefulness, and in declining to accept the grave responsibilities

of the high station to which GOD, by causing him to be born an eldest son, called him. But Esau's sin was greater than would be that of any youthful heir of the present day who would act, as we have, for the sake of argument, supposed he could act ; for in the days of Esau the eldest son was, by right of his eldership, the family priest, the one by whom religious sacrifices were to be offered, the representative of GOD to his brethren, and also their mouth-piece in approaching GOD and asking counsel of Him in extraordinary circumstances. This was why Esau was counted as "a profane person," because he despised the religious privileges of his birthright, believing neither in their worth, nor in the high purposes and intentions of GOD towards the family of Abraham.

Esau had a godly father, who must have instructed him concerning those promises and revealed intentions, yet he heeded not the teaching, and, in the very face of those revelations, married a heathen woman, "one of the daughters of Heth;" and finally, was so utterly wanting in faith in GOD that he bartered his birthright for a mess of pottage ! A poor creature truly, even from the merely human point of view, for he could neither patiently endure his hunger nor use any manly means to obtain food wherewith to satisfy it. Later, when he realised to some extent what he had lost, he desired to regain

it, and sought the forfeited blessing even with tears, but "found no place of repentance" for the sin whereby it had been forfeited. There could have been in him no "repentance after a godly sort," or he would assuredly have received pardon, and not have been pointed out to the Gentile Church by the Apostle of the Gentiles as "a profane person and a fornicator." Had his repentance been real sorrow for his sin, and not mere regret at the loss of his inheritance, he would not have hated his brother, and sought to murder him after the fashion of Cain of old.

Do not allow yourselves to be led away into any sentimental sympathy with Esau; but remember that though his life was marred—for which we must indeed pity him—it was marred by his own act and deed. Remember that, in being the elder son and the child of godly parents, he had all the chances that he *needed*, and he threw them all away. Again, on the other hand, while strongly condemning his fault, remember that it is possible for you yourselves to fall, to some extent, into the same fault.

It cannot, thanks be to GOD! be said of you at this present moment that you are profane persons, that is, persons who neither fear nor love GOD, and who regard not His laws. I have every reason to believe that you are far from being in so fearful a condition; but do not forget that it is still possible

that you may yet throw away your chances and barter your souls. It is quite possible, nay, even probable, if you trust to your own unaided strength, if you lean upon yourself alone; but—and do let me impress upon you this most comfortable *fact*—*quite impossible* so long as your trust is in GOD, your Father and your Friend, who “holdeth your soul in life,” and “who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

But although you are not now, and I pray that you never may be, “profane persons” as was Esau, do you never commit his sin in *kind*, though not in degree? Is there not occasionally in the best of you—(by “best” I mean the truest-hearted amongst you, those who have the purest and most unmixed motives)—an indifference to the things of GOD and a preference for the things of the world? Is not a religious service sometimes relinquished, not to fulfil a business call or a social duty, but in order to share in some worldly amusement, or to indulge the indolence that enjoys an extra hour in bed?

Alas! all of us modern Christians are too apt to let blessed opportunities of intercourse with GOD slip by without using them; and we do not allow ourselves to recollect, lest the recollection should disturb our peace, that we are selling to the Devil, for something quite as worthless as Esau’s

mess of red lentils, some little portion of our rights and privileges as "heirs of GOD and joint heirs with CHRIST."

And now we turn to the younger brother Jacob. There is much in the earlier portions of his history that is humiliating and saddening to the heart of man. He feared GOD; he believed in His promises; he earnestly desired His blessings; and yet his character was stained by nasty, mean, disagreeable faults. Some faults are on the surface, almost likeable; some sins are, as it were, gilded over by manly generosity and physical bravery; but those of Jacob are repulsive to generous, straightforward minds. We learn from his conduct to what "canniness" may deteriorate if not watched and guarded; and we learn that prudence may become cunning, and skilful trading descend into hard ungenerous dealing with friend and kinsman as well as stranger.

I hope that there are not many men who could treat a weary and hungry brother as hardly and meanly as Jacob treated Esau in the matter of the mess of pottage. In that transaction Esau acted as a fool and a coward, but Jacob as a churl and a knave. So anxious was he to obtain the birthright which he believed GOD intended should be his, that he took the obtaining of it into his own hands, and, forgetting brotherly affection and manly generosity, used means which were none of God's inspiring,

but of the Devil's teaching. As he had begun, so he went on. When, a little later, his mother proposed to him a whole train of deceitful actions, he listened willingly to her suggestions, his only demur arising from a fear of detection. He acted a lie and he spoke a lie, treacherously deceiving an *old* and *blind* man, and that man his own father; and yet (and this is the painfully humiliating part of the matter) he *was* one who, to a certain extent, believed in God, and feared and loved Him. The fact that one who had so much of holy faith and fear could sin so grievously should make us strictly watchful over all our thoughts, words, and actions; and make us very zealous that our faith and fear should go deep enough, and rise high enough to keep us from sinning in any measure as Jacob sinned.

We have clearer light and knowledge than was vouchsafed to him. The perfect MAN CHRIST JESUS has walked the earth in the flesh since the days of the patriarch Jacob. He is with us now in and by His sacraments; and He teaches us by the inspired writings of His Apostles, and by the inner breathings of the HOLY GHOST in our hearts, that all forms of deceit and falsity are abhorrent to God, and that we must neither "lie one to another" nor "go beyond and defraud our brother in any matter."

But even in that time of lesser revealed light and

knowledge GOD did not leave His servant Jacob in ignorance of his sin. That He did not do so we learn by the nature of the punishments with which Jacob was throughout his after-life visited—punishments which did indeed have blessed effects, as all GOD's should have, and *would* always have for us all, were it not that the Devil sometimes succeeds in his endeavours to make them embitter and harden, rather than purify and soften us. GOD permitted the cunning and crooked dealing of Laban to be the means whereby His own erring servant Jacob should meet with his most fitting chastisement, and be guided to see, as in a mirror, the similar nature of his own past transgressions. Sins similar in kind to his own besetting failing, committed by another man, became his scourging rod.

Let us recall the story to our minds, and follow some of its details. Jacob, afraid of the vengeance of Esau, and influenced also by his parent's desire that he should become acquainted with his maternal kindred, fled into the land of Padan Aram, and took refuge in the house of his uncle Laban.

Shortly after there came to him what is, or ought to be, one of the most important phases in a man's life. To use the common saying of our modern days, he fell in love. In no novel or poem has this most lovely subject—a young man's pure love for a virtuous maiden—been so beautifully

described as in the divinely-inspired record which tells of Jacob's love.

Poetry and music, because they are beautiful, must have had their origin in the Author and Giver of all beauty, as of "every good and perfect gift." From His inspiration there came those touchingly beautiful words :

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had for her."

For seven years the man toiled early and late that he might win his loved and lovely Rachel. And at last came the day to which he had long looked forward—the day which ought to have been happy, but was, alas ! miserable, because of the foul deception practised upon him. Instead of Rachel, whom he loved, he was given Leah, whom he did not love.

You, as young men, to whom pure love and honourable marriage are no distant probabilities, can realise the bitterness of his disappointment, the keenness of his grief. That GOD should have suffered so terrible a punishment to fall upon him, gives us at least some insight into that God's abhorrence of deceit and double-dealing, and shows us how intensely He hates a lie.

Often, after that first great deception, was Jacob cheated by Laban, and yet Jacob laboured honestly

for twenty years in his service, GOD prospering his work, and even teaching him a skilful and perfectly legitimate way of obtaining the fulfilment of a promise which Laban had made to him, but which he had treacherously designed should never be fulfilled.

GOD did prosper Jacob's handiwork, and did show him many a kind token of His favour; yet all his life through Jacob was a tried and sorrow-laden man. *Because* GOD loved him well, and saw better than any other eye could the real good that was in him, He chastened him, and the chastening "did its perfect work," so that the man's natural faults were gradually but most surely overcome.

When he fled from his home, the LORD met him, and the hour of his vision at Bethel was the beginning of his life-long conversion and progressive amendment under the vigilant discipline of his GOD. His state was a sad one when he lay down that night at Bethel; he was flying from the wrath of a not unjustly offended brother; he carried with him the sense of his aged, godly father's pained displeasure; and there must have been sharp stings of conscience, far harder than all the rest to bear;—but the LORD met him. Beautifully, because truthfully, does the familiar hymn express his feelings after that meeting—

“Out of my stony griefs
Bethel I'll raise ;
So by my woes to be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.”

Jacob had obtained the “birthright,” and now he used it by building an altar to the LORD ; and giving Him an offering of oil, pledged himself to His service, vowing that of all which GOD should give him of worldly substance, the tenth should be returned to the Giver. Then trace the after-history, and see how he grows in righteousness of life. He who had been impulsively hasty to seize the birth-right and the blessing was content to toil patiently for seven years to obtain the woman whom he loved, and during that time we do not hear that his love wandered from Rachel, even in fancy, much less in act. He protected her even from himself, guarding and regulating even his love for her, for her dear sake, so that no ill should touch her through him.

Alas ! how different from this is the conduct of many a young man ! I need not say Jacob's was the real love, which many men fancy they have ; the love that deems that a woman who is worth having is worth waiting for ; the unselfish love that holds the honour of the beloved object dearer than life itself, and that will not wrong that object by word or thought.

Jacob worked, and toiled, and waited seven years for his marriage gladness, and then, when Rachel had been given to him, toiled and laboured seven other years in thankfulness for the gift. And *this* was the man who had bought his weary, hungry brother's birthright with the red lentil soup which he should rather have given him; so great was the work that Divine Grace had wrought on his heart. And its holy influences continued to abide within him; for, for six years after those fourteen did he patiently bear Laban's exactions and treacherous dealing, until the LORD, having shown him that he had endured enough of that species of chastisement, bade him take his departure for the land of Canaan. When, on his journey homewards, Laban overtook him, and with overbearing rudeness reproached him, the once timorous Jacob replied in a tone of manly confidence that quite subdued Laban, and the two men came to an agreement "not to harm one another;" in token whereof they erected a pillar of stones and called it "Mizpah." This cairn was by no means a token of affection, but only of prevention of wrong-dealing; and because of its associations the word cannot be appropriately used as a watchword of love between faithful friends who have never wronged each other, and have no intention of doing so. To give a locket or ring with this

word engraved on it to any friend is really to imply a sense of distrust of that person, and to show that there is some necessity for keeping a constant watch upon him or her lest he or she should "*do harm*" to the friend who has given it.

And now we have followed Jacob to another great crisis in his life, to the eve of the first meeting with his brother after a separation of twenty years, the brother from whose wrath he had fled in fear. How did Jacob meet this crisis? He fortified himself by all the aids of religion; he prayed to the God who had chastened and pardoned him; who had guided and guarded and blessed him all those twenty years. Using his natural prudence wisely and righteously, not craftily, as of old, he took various precautionary and conciliatory measures, and patiently bided the issue.

When left alone in the watches of the night, whilst thinking over the past and the future, God again visited him, but with richer blessing and with fuller manifestation than at Bethel; for the SECOND PERSON in the DIVINE TRINITY came to him, and wrestled with him. What did not Jacob learn in that mysterious and marvellous "wrestling" in which he "prevailed"! You also will prevail if you wrestle as Jacob wrestled; for God loves to be so prevailed upon, and in being thus vanquished

He is Victor. In all the momentous crises of life, in the bitter assaults of temptation, let us

“Wrestle till we see His face
And know His hidden Name.”

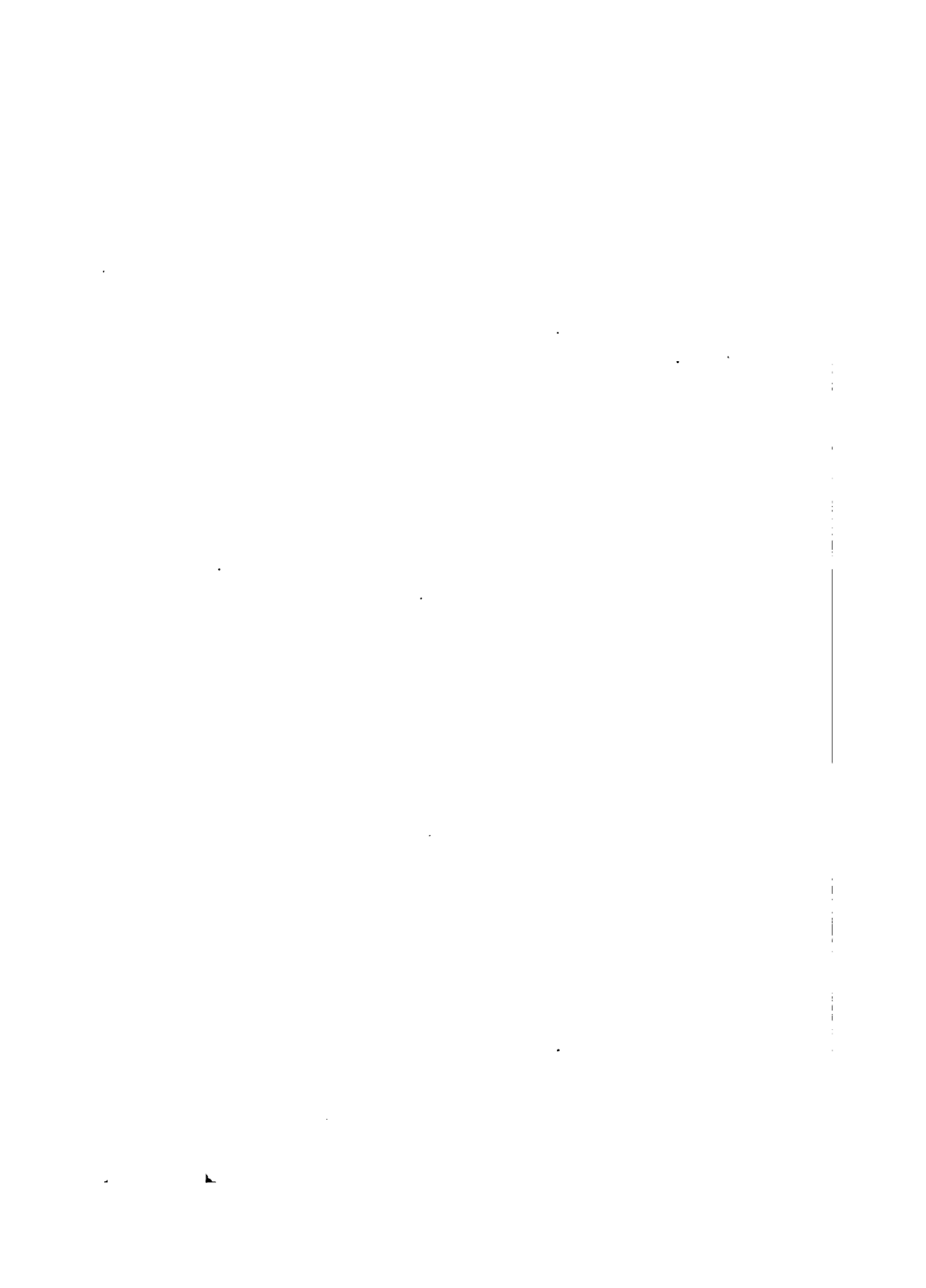
Let us say as Jacob said—

“I will not let Thee go unless
Thou tell Thy Name to me ;
With all Thy great salvation bless,
And make me all like Thee.”

Esau became a great and prosperous man, and the founder of great families. Jacob, though wealthy, saw not in his lifetime the fulfilment of the promise of the inheritance of the Land of Canaan, and was content with obscurity and lowliness of condition. Yet which of us who has any knowledge of God would not rather be as Jacob than as Esau? Who would not rather be the LORD's lowliest servant, patiently waiting for the Heavenly Canaan, than be the world's slave, as was Esau? I trust that each one here is determined to make the choice of Jacob, and not the choice of Esau, and, whilst hating and carefully avoiding all that was wrong in the beginnings of Jacob's life, imitate him in his after steadiness of purpose, his faithful promise-keeping, his tender, cleaving, unselfish love to his betrothed sweetheart; and above all, in the deep religiousness of heart which sought GOD's guidance in all things,

which was ever ready to do GOD honour. If this be so with you, though your life may, like his, be clouded by many sorrows, many cares and anxieties, you will at the end thereof be able to say, as he said, "The Angel of the LORD hath redeemed me from all evil."

TALK V.



JOSEPH.

THE YOUNG MAN'S ALMOST PERFECT PATTERN.

THROUGHOUT the long ages of the Church's history under the Old Dispensation, there was no more complete and beautiful of human types of the one all-perfect Divine MAN than Joseph, the youngest but one, and the most dearly beloved, of all the twelve sons of Jacob; and because of the completeness and perfectness of his typical character, there is no man more eminently fitted to be a model and example of life to Christian men, privileged as they are to live in the brighter, fuller light of the New Dispensation.

In the characters of even the best of the men about whom we have hitherto talked, and of almost all those concerning whom we shall, if God spares us, talk in days to come, we have found, and we shall find, many faults to be avoided by us, many shortcomings to be regretted; but in the character of Joseph as given to us by the inspiration of God there seems no serious fault. In his whole recorded conduct there is nothing to be avoided,

and we have not the slightest cause for doubt concerning the almost perfect excellence of Joseph's character, because the unsparing truthfulness with which in Scripture history the faults of even holy men are set forth should convince us of the equal exactness and faithfulness of the record of a life which in its outward aspect had scarcely a blemish.

In its *outward* aspect; for we must ever remember that Joseph was but a man—but a type, and not the Being typified; and that, therefore, he did of necessity partake of the original sin in which Adam's fall involved all mankind. Wrong thoughts and feelings must have often stirred within him; hasty and careless words must sometimes have escaped his lips, even though it seems certain that, by the grace of GOD, those thoughts and words did not ripen into the bitter fruits of deadly sin.

Only a man! From another point of view I wish you to remember that fact. Recollect that the life which could be led, and *was* led, by a mere man living in the lesser light of the Old Dispensation, and aided by fewer outward helps and privileges, *can* be led by any mere man living in the brilliant light of the Gospel of Peace, and in membership with the Church bought by the Blood of JESUS, sanctified by the HOLY GHOST, and richly endowed with sacramental grace and spiritual privileges.

Joseph, of all the Old Testament saints, is pre-

eminently the *young* man's exemplar. He did live to be what in these days would be called "a very old man;" but at that period of the world's history, he could not, when he died, have been reckoned as aged. His father Jacob numbered a hundred and forty and seven years; his grandfather Isaac died when one hundred and eighty years old; but he himself "went" at a hundred and ten years; therefore he was, even at the date of his death, a comparatively young man. But were that not so, all the chief events of his life, all those circumstances which were the crucial tests of his character, happened when he was what would be considered at this present period as young.

Think of Joseph, then, young men, as your own especial pattern, your own particular saint in the older Church, and follow out with me, in thought, those special points of his character which may be made useful to yourselves in the forming of your own characters and in the regulation of your own conduct.

Let us start from the very beginning, and see him in the primal relation of every man's life, that of a son. Joseph was a teachable, obedient, and loving son. He must have been all three, or his father could not have loved him with such special and all-engrossing love as we are told that he bestowed upon him. We have a proof given us of

his obedience. His father bade him go and see to the welfare of his ten brethren, who were feeding their flocks in Shechem; and he went immediately, without, as far as we are told, a word of objection or a moment's hesitation. Yet he might, without any heinous disrespect, have uttered some little remonstrance; for he was only seventeen years old, and the distance he was desired to go was about forty miles. Worse than the distance was the fact that he was being sent to brethren who had no brotherly feelings towards him; nay, who, as he knew, hated him—ten men much older than himself, strong and powerful, and who hated him! A boy of seventeen might well have been excused had he spoken some word of fear, some request to be let off from the execution of so perilous and trying a duty.

You see, then, that he was obedient, not only when it was easy and pleasant to be so, but also when to render obedience was difficult and painful. He was also courageous and manly-hearted, showing no signs of fear, although almost certainly he must have felt some, for the persons who have performed the most notably courageous actions have invariably been those who have understood *most thoroughly* the difficulties and dangers attending those actions, and who have felt most keenly the natural human shrinking from danger and difficulty, but have felt

it, *only to conquer* it. Need any of you be reminded that the all-perfect GOD-MAN, of whom Joseph was but a type, was an obedient son? It is written, "He was subject unto them"—to Blessed Mary His mother, and to St. Joseph, His reputed father and earthly guardian.

You know in what manner the brethren of Joseph requited his kindness in going to ask after their welfare; that at first they put him into a pit, intending (all of them, save Reuben) that he should there die of starvation, and that later, they changed that intention, and sold him to a company of travelling merchants who were going down with merchandise into Egypt. These evil men sold their young brother, the helpless lad of seventeen, for sundry pieces of silver, instigated thereto by Judah. Long ages after, one called Judas, of the tribe of Judah, sold for pieces of silver his LORD and Master, his once familiar friend.

We are not told of any remonstrance on the part of Joseph when either of these cruel deeds was perpetrated against him, or of any expression of anger, when his treasured "coat of many colours," his father's loved and loving gift, was stripped off from him.

Is not this conduct an example for you? Not only is the absence of all expression of anger to be imitated, but also the manliness of patient

submission to the inevitable. The lad who went bravely forth to meet sure and certain difficulty and danger in the path of duty at the call of filial obedience, submitted in all the dignity of silence to the calamities that he could not possibly avert. Only he who can act bravely when bravery is likely to be of any possible value can endure silently when endurance is the one thing remaining to be done. Only he who can endure silently when no bravery will avail can act bravely when bravery may be of use. To go higher, as we must ever go in studying this typical character; is there not ringing in the mind's ear of each one of you the rhythm of these words, almost the most pathetic in the language of pathos?—

*“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet
He opened not His mouth: He is brought
as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep
before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth
not His mouth.”*

“As a sheep before her shearers!” How true both of the type and the Antitype. From Joseph's back was torn the coat which had been a father's love-gift, and he offered no word of complaint. From the person of the Blessed JESUS was torn the coat without seam, woven from the top without; the robe that in all probability had been made for Him by His loved and loving mother, to whom He had

ever shown the tender obedience of a good son ; and He, too, under this insult, was "dumb."

Remember, boys, that cowardice is *not* CHRIST-like. Joseph of old, and the better Joseph, went bravely forth, each to his "brethren who hated" him, at the command of the Father who sent him, heeding not the dangers and difficulties of the service ; and each,—when the dangers and pains were inevitable,—endured them in all the dignity of silence. Be strong, then, to *do* and to *bear*, as were Joseph and JESUS, the type and the anti-type.

Obedience to his father and bravery in doing and in enduring were noble foundations for a noble character, beautiful beginnings of a beautiful life. He who, as a lad of seventeen, could show forth virtues such as these, was not likely to prove wanting in them, and in other lovely fruits of which they were the blossom, when he became a man ; and so we see that Joseph, when overseer of Potiphar's house, was still obedient. He was as faithful and dutiful a servant as he had been a son. He was obedient not only when in his master's sight, but also when out of his sight.

You young men who are in service of any kind, take Joseph as your pattern ; be faithful, honest, and upright as he was, and the blessing wherewith Joseph was blessed will assuredly be yours also.

Do you remember what that blessing was? "All that he did the LORD made to prosper in his hand."

No son of GOD, from the Divine MAN downwards, has ever been without sorrow and without temptation. I once heard this truth most beautifully, because most simply, worded: "God has had *one* SON without sin; He has had *no* son without sorrow."

How then could Joseph, the saintliest of His olden-day sons, have been without both sorrow and temptation? Grievings and pains, physical and mental, he had already suffered; now he had to be tried by a sore temptation—that temptation which, in some one or other of its many forms, seems most especially to come to men in their early manhood; and in Joseph's manner of resisting this temptation, common to humanity, we plainly read, for the first time, what we have all along guessed, the secret cause of the excellence of Joseph's conduct. It was because he had feared and loved GOD that he had been an obedient son, a brave and patiently enduring boy, a faithful and honest servant.

He feared GOD, and therefore "had no other fear;" he loved GOD, therefore no impure and ignoble passion (too often profanely called by the God-like name of love) could burn in his heart. Yet, full though he was of this holy fear and love, there was no boastful utterance of them in his speech; there was, in fact, no shadow of what we in these days call "cant;"

rather, there was in the young man a holy and modest reserve concerning the things which he loved and valued most ; for we find that at the first onslaught of temptation, he answered the evil woman who tempted him with suggestions of human kindness, and gratitude, and worldly honour. " Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I, neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife." Probably, finding that these arguments, good and honourable as they were, were not sufficiently strong for his purpose, the young man no longer keeps back his highest reason, but says, in words as few as they are strong, as manly as they are holy, "*How, then, can I do this great wickedness and SIN AGAINST GOD?*"

It seems almost as if any words that any one could say would but weaken the force of this strong protest ; yet I must ask you to remember always that Joseph viewed the sin *as a great wickedness*, and one specially directed against GOD Himself, as indeed it is ; for as GOD at the first created man in His own image, and afterwards in the person of CHRIST took upon Him the nature and form of man ; to insult and defile that manhood and that flesh which He so greatly honoured is, in the most direct of all ways, to insult and dishonour Him.

Resist all impurity of thought, word, and deed for the reason for which Joseph resisted it, because it is "great wickedness and sin against GOD;" and remember, that if you are young, he also was young—an exile banished from his father's home, motherless, friendless, a servant and slave, who, in a worldly point of view, might have gained by yielding to this temptation, and who certainly brought much temporal loss and trouble upon himself by his steadfast resistance thereof.

He was unjustly accused—(I need not remind you that against JESUS "false witnesses did rise up, laying to His charge things that He knew not")—and he was cast into prison, where he had many sufferings, as we learn from the 105th Psalm: "His feet they hurt in the stocks; the iron entered into his soul;" also his father Jacob, when giving him his dying blessing, said, "The archers have sorely wounded him, and shot at him, and hated him."

In the prison, as you know, "the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison." Once again he was placed in a position of trust, and acted as a faithful servant. Not only was he faithful to his jailer, he was also kind and sympathising to his fellow-prisoners: he had "a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathise," instead

of one ready to think only of its own woes and troubles.

You all remember how two of these fellow-prisoners one night dreamed wondrous dreams, which Joseph interpreted to them, and that the interpretation came true. One of these criminals was pardoned and restored to the favour of the king of Egypt, and before he left the prison Joseph requested him to remember to mention him to the king, so that he might "be taken out of this house." We learn from this that Joseph did not neglect any lawful means of improving his condition and of being set free from trial. He could endure affliction bravely and patiently when it was unavoidable, but also, like a true brave man, he let slip no right and reasonable chance of getting the affliction removed from him.

Another point I wish you to observe. Joseph told the outline of his sorrowful story to the chief butler, and also told him that he had done nothing deserving of cruel punishment; but neither at this time nor when he had been cast into prison did he attempt to justify himself by incriminating Potiphar's wife. He was too manly to betray her fault, evil woman though she was, and though he might have aided himself by doing so. For a time "the chief butler forgot Joseph." Two more years—"full years," the Bible says—Joseph lay in prison; then

the king dreamed a dream which troubled him greatly, and the butler, hearing of his trouble, and that the magicians and wise men of Egypt could not relieve it, bethought him of the wise young Hebrew prisoner and his true interpretation of dreams.

You know the remainder of the story, how Joseph was sent for out of prison and brought before the king, and how he found such favour in his eyes that he became the ruler of the land, and second only to the king in dignity and honour.

You have all known the story from your early childhood, for it was told you by your mothers and Sunday-school teachers, and probably it was the first that you spelled out for yourselves in the pages of that Book which I earnestly hope is to you all the best loved as well as the most honoured of books; but now that we are talking together over the story, with the view of finding examples for your own conduct as young men from the conduct of the young man Joseph, I should like you to recall to your memory that although he was taken from the prison "in haste," he took the trouble to change his raiment, and otherwise, to "make himself tidy," as we should say now-a-days, before going into the presence of his superiors; and he did more than that, he "shaved himself," an act not customary amongst the Hebrews, who loved to wear long beards, an ornament which

the Egyptians disliked and despised. I think that this deference to the habits and tastes of the king was not merely politic and prudent, though it was both these, but also a proof of the ever-considerate courtesy and unselfishness of Joseph's heart. Recall also that as soon as he stood before Pharaoh, this young man, altogether unknown, save as one just brought out of a prison, had the courage to own the GOD whom he served, though he was not the GOD of the Egyptians, and to declare with deep humility as regarded self and high confidence as regarded GOD, "It is not in me; GOD shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Before going farther in the story, let us once again trace the typical lessons unfolded in its foregoing details. Joseph, unjustly accused, was cast into prison, where he aided his fellow-prisoners, and where he probably remained three years, at the end of which time he was suddenly taken away, leaving his old garments behind him, and was exalted to great glory and power, and made to ride in the second of the royal chariots, all men crying before him, "Bow the knee!" He used his great power and dignity to be the benefactor of Egypt and of other lands, to be a giver of bread to the hungry.

JESUS, falsely accused of crimes that He knew not, was put to death, crucified between two

thieves, one of whom repented of his sins, and was taken into the eternal favour of GOD. JESUS went down into the prison of the grave, into Hades, where "He preached to the spirits in prison," and from whence at the end of three days He rose, and, leaving His grave-clothes behind Him, was arrayed in new raiment, and shortly after He ascended into heaven, where He now sitteth at the right hand of GOD, bearing the Name now exalted above every name, the Name at which "every knee shall bow;" and where He is ever acting as the Benefactor of the world, the Giver of bread to all who with faithful, hungering hearts feed upon Him in "the Sacrament of His Love."

Wondrously and gloriously indeed does the Anti-type exceed the type, and yet most beautifully significant are the typical meanings enfolded in the character and life of Joseph the son of Jacob.

Amongst other earthly blessings which came to Joseph was that of marriage. A good son almost always makes a good husband, and there can be no question as to the excellence of Joseph's conduct in his conjugal relation. The man who shrank with fear and loathing from insulting his GOD by an impure passion, was a man eminently fitted to enjoy with deep enthusiasm of heart all "the dear delights of pure wedded love." The man who would not speak evil of even an evil woman behind

her back because she was a woman, was surely one to be most tenderly lenient and gentle to the small faults and failings of his own virtuous wife. The man who could show courteous deference to the customs of the country in which he lived, and perfect politeness to the sovereign, would assuredly not fail in considerate courtesy and manly tenderness to his wife. One thing, at any rate, we certainly know, that, like his grandfather Isaac, he conformed to GOD's own first ideal of marriage, and took to himself no secondary or inferior wife, but "loved one woman only," and "clave to her," being chaste and pure in thought and act from the beginning to the end of his life.

We may reasonably conclude that as in Egypt there was tolerance of all religious opinion, Joseph brought his wife to a belief in the one true GOD, the GOD whom he had always served, and that his household laws and customs were regulated and moulded by the law of GOD as it had been handed down to him from his fathers.

With all his social prosperity and domestic happiness, Joseph must ever have had the sanctifying, chastening influence that a great sorrow and loss in life should have upon every person so tried. In banishment from home and parent, and ever bearing about within him the memory of years of slavery and imprisonment, he could not have been a joyous man,

and was therefore perhaps a better man than he could have been had there been no "crook in his lot," no drawback to full earthly enjoyment.

At last his quiet though busy and practically benevolent life was moved to its foundations, and all the dearest but long-repressed yearnings of his heart stirred into active emotion, by the sudden and unexpected sight of nine of his brethren, of the men who had sold him, some twenty years previously, into slavery. Joseph was so schooled and habituated by years of patient self-discipline to the perfection of self-control, that he was able to resist making himself known to his brethren until after he had, with great wisdom and tact, so dealt with them as to be sure that their characters were improved, and that his young brother Benjamin was kindly treated by them.

When he did make himself known to his brethren, it was with an overflowing tenderness, almost unequalled in the annals of history. Brave and enduring though he was, uncompromising in principle, stern to resist evil, he was also manly enough to think it no shame to shed tears of tender brotherly love, and to make the most minute and elaborate arrangements for the comfort of his father and his other relations on their journey into Egypt.

Joseph hid his face for a time from his brethren and spake roughly unto them, and his great Anti-

type did sometimes hide His face from His brethren according to the flesh, even speaking roughly to the Syro-Phenician woman in order to test her faith; nay, more, He allowed Lazarus to lie four days in the grave before He went to comfort the sorrowing sisters who were longing for His presence, and whom He loved dearly. Often and often now, does this better Joseph seem to hide His face from His people. He does not always give us the sunshine of His love, but allows us to continue in depression and sadness of heart in order to test our faith, and see whether we will cling to Him in spite of all cloud and fear, whether we really believe, as a good man of old once said, "that it is better for us *to be* unhappy with JESUS than to imagine ourselves happy with the Devil."

Remember that even to the greatly beloved and unoffending Benjamin Joseph did not at once reveal himself; and yet, while treating him with seeming coldness, he sent to him from his own table a mess five times greater than he sent to any of his other brothers. Thus now there is many a Christian Benjamin very dear to CHRIST who cannot at once realise CHRIST's love for him, and who seems to himself to be lonely and sorrowful, but who yet some day, in the "full sunshine" of his LORD's smile, will see that he was, even in his darkest hour, being kept by bountiful grace from yielding

to deadly temptations, into which, had his spirit been lighter and life more outwardly prosperous, he might have fallen, to his soul's eternal misery.

Joseph, as we have said, made provision for the comfort of his father, both on his journey into Egypt and in his residence in that country. JESUS also provided a comfortable and peaceful home for His mother; and in the more directly spiritual sense, He provides every possible means of grace for the aid and sustenance of the very weakest members of His body, so that those who, like the aged Jacob and the little ones, cannot walk, may be "carried in waggons" in going along the spiritual journey.

I hope that this talk which we have had together upon the history of Joseph and its typical meanings may lead you to study it more closely for yourselves; and, above all, lead you to imitate him in those points of his character in which you *can*, if you *will*, imitate him; for remember that *you* are strengthened, as he was not, by full membership with CHRIST, and by every means of grace which CHRIST has provided for you, His dearly-loved brethren.

Endeavour, each of you, to be, like Joseph, an obedient and loving son, a faithful servant, a sympathising, helpful friend, a wise and benevolent citizen, a courteous gentleman, a loyal subject; and, above all, strive to have, as he had, a holy

horror of impurity and of all sin, because it is hateful to GOD; and to be, as he was, brave in doing, patient in enduring, ready to forgive injuries, to return good for evil, and to spend and be spent for others. Like him, be full of holy confidence in GOD, and look in full assurance of faith for the time when you shall enter into the Heavenly Canaan, the kingdom of GOD, of which in your baptism you were made an inheritor.

TALK VI.

MOSES.

WAITING TO BE PERFECTED FOR WORK—TRUE PATRIOTISM.

A MOMENT'S thought given to the subject will show us how suitable and natural it is that almost all our knowledge of the early life of Moses, the great law-giver of the Old Testament,—or will of GOD concerning His Israelitish Church,—should come to us from the New Testament, from the revelation of GOD'S dealings with His Christian Church, and His purposes concerning her. Let us now join the two accounts, and from the few details given us in Exodus, and the fuller narration of the heroic young deacon St. Stephen (it also in its turn illumined by the remarks of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews), learn as much as we possibly can about the early life and character of Moses, into the account of whose *later* years I do not purpose to lead you.

The Book of Exodus opens, as you will remember, with a description of the hardships and miseries of the Hebrew people in bondage under “a king who knew not Joseph,” who, at any rate,

did not choose to remember the obligations which the Egyptians owed to that Joseph, and who saw in the Hebrews a rapidly increasing people who might become dangerous enemies to the state of Egypt. In fear lest they might so increase and multiply as ere long to outnumber their masters, the cruel king made edicts whereby their posterity might be cut off; but to no purpose did he make these laws. God frustrated his designs, and the Hebrews grew and increased.

Amongst this oppressed people were a man and woman of the house of Levi, to whom were given a son, "so goodly a babe" that he was carefully hidden for three months from the murderous emissaries of Pharaoh, and this by the special faith of the parents, as the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us. At the end of three months, his mother Jochebed, by another great venture of faith, committed him to the river Nile in a little ark or cradle made of bulrushes.

He was found by the greatest lady in the land, even the daughter of Pharaoh, and the beauty and the tears of the child (for "behold the babe wept") so moved her heart, that though she knew him to belong to the Hebrew people, she caused him to be nursed at her cost by one of that people, choosing, probably in all unconsciousness, his own mother to be the nurse. Jochebed was faithful to her double

obligation, the natural and the imposed one; and when she had weaned her child, she took him to the great lady, who forthwith adopted him as her own son, and called him by the name of Moses, that is, "Drawn out," as she said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

Now, were it not for the New Testament, we should know nothing more concerning the youth of Moses; but let us turn to the dying speech of the martyr Stephen, and learn much which Moses when writing the Book of Exodus was scarcely likely to tell us of himself. St. Stephen says, "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds." Let us pause here before going farther, and try to realise what these words imply concerning the circumstances and character of Moses.

The Egyptian nation was at that period one of the most civilised, perhaps *the* most civilised, of all the nations of the world; the people had advanced far in the knowledge of the arts and sciences, had reared many stately buildings, and were governed by a wonderfully elaborate state polity. They were divided into castes, or different ranks, and each rank had its own privileges, and duties, and honours. The higher classes enjoyed all the then known luxuries of life, having large spacious houses, many servants, costly furniture,

dainty personal apparel, and handsome chariots drawn by swift horses imported from Barbary and other neighbouring parts of Africa. Amongst a people such as this, and in the higher ranks, almost the highest rank of that people, was the young Moses trained. Many old traditions assert that he was even in the position of the heir to the kingdom; that his adopted mother was the reigning sovereign; and that he, as being called her son, was destined to be her successor; but for this opinion there is no reliable authority either in Holy Scripture or in secular history; the latter, however, is rather misty and uncertain as to the succession of the early kings of Egypt, which uncertainty arises chiefly from the fact that all of them bore in common the name or title of Pharaoh.

It is enough for us to know that Moses *was* in a high position in the kingdom, enjoying the pleasures and possessing the riches which were befitting a man of exalted station. St. Stephen tells us that when Moses "was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren of the children of Israel." What a difference that visit made to the whole course of his after-life! He was never after it the same man, either in character or in worldly circumstances; in fact, it was one of those turning-points which occur in greater or less degree in every human life.

It is possible that almost up to the period of that visit Moses had not even known to what race and lineage he belonged, had not known that he was other than an Egyptian, or had other mother than the great princess whose son he was called. At any rate, whether this were so or not, it is evident that until then he had never realised the duties and obligations and expectations involved in being a Hebrew; and immediately upon the realisation thereof there awoke within his heart that wonderful emotion of love for his own people, his own nation, which we are accustomed to call "patriotism," and which is one of the noblest of man's moral, as distinguished from his mental and spiritual qualities. With many men, and those some of the worthiest members of society, the feeling has amounted to an absolute passion, and only by its means has anything greatly advantageous for a nation ever been accomplished.

By patriotism I do not mean love for the land of one's birth, for the material country, but for the race which has long inhabited that land, a man's own race and lineage, and this love it was that Moses possessed. He longed earnestly for the advancement of those who were of his own flesh and blood, the Israelitish people. The first proof that he gave of his strong regard for his own people was certainly an emphatic

one. He slew the Egyptian whom he saw oppressing some of them; and in that act many of the fathers and learned doctors of the Catholic Church in various ages seem to have agreed he was not blameworthy. "There is killing and killing." What in one case is a foul murder may in another be a justifiable, nay, a necessary action.

We gather from the testimony of St. Stephen that Moses "supposed that by that act his brethren would have understood how that GOD by his hand would deliver them." But alas! they understood not; and when the following day he tried to act the part of a peacemaker between two of them who were quarrelling, they turned upon him with ignorant reproaches for his slaughter of the Egyptian. Finding that his brethren knew not his purpose of mercy towards them, Moses fled, not in fear, but as a precautionary measure, in order to be safely kept until the time for being able to aid effectually his brethren should arrive. These, his motives, we do not find in his own narration of his life, but we find them in the emphatic words of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "*By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*"

We are justified in believing that during the whole of his forty years' sojourn in Midian he was ever remembering his life's aim and purpose, and

never regretful that, by faith in the invisible God of his fathers, he had refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and had chosen "rather to suffer affliction with the people of GOD than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." The names which he gave to the two sons born to him in the land of his exile confirm this belief as to the nature of his feelings and to the steadfastness of his purpose. One he called "Gershom," or "Stranger;" the other "Eliezer," or "GOD is help." For forty years Moses waited in faith and patience; and yet some of us think ourselves hardly used if we have to wait a few years, nay, even a few months, for the fulfilment of our cherished desires.

When at last the waiting-time was over, and Moses at eighty years of age was allowed to enter upon his mission, the fair flowers and goodly fruits that had been nourished in those waiting years could be seen and known of all men.

A great patience characterised his dealings with his fellow-men; he who had patiently waited God's time could patiently wait on the varying moods of his countrymen: he was tolerant, long-suffering, and meek; and perhaps he would have had none of those graces had he taken the leadership of the people of Israel immediately upon the first stirring of his heart towards them, and had he not been trained by the loss of the luxuries and

honours of a great court, and by the pains and sorrows of exile and of servitude as a keeper of another man's sheep.

Before summing up the various points wherein his example may be of priceless value to you as young men, let us try to trace some of the typical lessons enfolded in the circumstances of his youth—the typical foreshadowings of CHRIST.

Moses was born in a time of darkness and bondage: so was CHRIST, when the Jews were in all but nominal subjection to the Romans, and when the darkness of heathenism was spread over all the Roman world, save only in the province of Judea. Moses was laid in the unusual cradle of an ark, or little boat of plaited bulrushes: CHRIST in a place equally unsuitable for a babe—the manger of an ox's stall. Both were exposed to danger in infancy by the hatred and malice of the great of this world—Moses by that of Pharaoh, CHRIST by that of Herod; and yet both were honoured by the notice of princely personages—Moses by that of Pharaoh's daughter, CHRIST by the homage of the wise men from the East, supposed by common tradition to have been kings. Each was miraculously preserved by GOD, and each went forth from Egypt to save and bless GOD's people. One deeper and yet more spiritual meaning, and then we shall turn to the practical lessons to be derived from our subject. Moses was borne

in safety *on* the water, and delivered *out* of the water of the Nile, and he afterwards delivered his brethren through the waters of the Red Sea, which drowned their enemies. Is there not here a clear figure of Him who came by Water and by Blood ; who was raised from the grave, and who draws His people out of the water in baptism, and raises them to a new life, and to royal dignity as kings and priests unto God ?

And now let us dwell in thought upon those traits in the character of Moses which are the most prominent, and the most likely to be of service to yourselves as young men. These seem to me to be his enthusiastic patriotism, coupled with a power of patient endurance of years of enforced inaction ; indeed, of what must have been almost stagnation to a man who had lived in the busy and highly civilised court of Egypt ; also his large tolerance and almost unvarying forbearance towards his fellow-men, coupled with burning zeal for the honour of God, and hatred of all dishonour done to Him. You must ever remember that every one of these noble characteristics had its root in the first deliberate choice of God and His law in preference to the Devil and his law—in the deliberate renunciation of the world's pleasures and riches and honours, and the taking up of reproach and affliction with the people of God.

First his patriotism; that is a virtue not so much in fashion as it used to be, partly because on the surface of things there does not appear to be so much need for it as there was in former ages, and partly because people are so much accustomed to be thought for by the newspapers that they will not take the trouble to think enough for themselves. Most of what boys and young men, aye, and even some older men, are pleased to call their political opinions have been taken second-hand, cut and dried. Again, what is far worse, but what is, alas! not at all uncommon, a man avows himself to be on a certain side in politics because it is for his worldly interest to be so, whilst all the time his heart's best instincts and warmest feelings are bound up in an entirely contrary system. How different this from the spirit of Moses, nay, from the spirit of men nearer to our own times—of our very own forebears, it may be, who gloried in the enunciation of their honest political opinions, and were ready to die, ay, and many a time did die, in defence of them!

What is it that I would wish you to do in this matter? I would have you take the trouble to search into all matters concerning the welfare of your country for yourselves, to weigh and consider all momentous questions in your own minds, aided, of course, by persons on whose wisdom and judgment

you can rely, and in whose unblemished honour you can trust; and I would have you reserve all public utterance of your judgment until you have of your own deliberate conviction, thus guided and aided, formed one, and then, having so formed one, to declare it boldly and conscientiously whenever it be necessary to do so, whether it be on the popular side or not, whether it does or does not promote your worldly interest. I would have you show yourselves true patriots by using all your influence, however limited it may be, in opposing any measures that, after due and wisely aided consideration, you honestly believe to be contrary to the revealed will of God and injurious to the bodies and souls of your fellow-countrymen, and to do so whether those measures are advocated by your own particular "party in politics" or not.

You need not go far to search for iniquitous dealings with the public; the almost unlimited sale of intoxicating liquors to persons of any age, the trade in opium, the divorce law, the attempt to legalise marriage with a deceased wife's sister, are measures which you should look into for yourselves; and if you be convinced (as I cannot but believe you will be) that they are iniquities calculated to destroy both body and soul, then oppose them by every means that is lawfully within your power if you would imitate the patriotism of Moses.

There is another way in which patriotism may be shown even in these easy-going days, when love of country is little more than a name—that is, by heartfelt respect for the Army and Navy as national institutions for the preservation of your homes and yourselves in times of danger. Earnestly endeavour to raise the mental and moral condition of the men who take their lives in their hands to promote your safety. Do not say that you can do nothing for them; one most important help each one of you can give—Prayer! Do you ever give it? Do you ever pray that God will guard men of your own flesh and blood who are ready at any moment to fight your battles and die, if needs be, for you, that you may live at home in ease and safety? Do you pray that God's HOLY SPIRIT may keep them from grievous sin and guide them to true holiness? Do you ever think sorrowfully, regretfully, not scornfully, of their many temptations to evil, and pray that measures may be taken to guard them more carefully against yielding thereto? Have you ever given even one penny, or asked another person for a penny, in aid of the endeavours made by good, heroic people to promote their moral and spiritual welfare? If you have not as yet done all or one of these things, begin now to do them, and be as truly patriotic in heart as was Moses, although you will never be called upon to perform such brilliant actions as he was called to perform.

Moses was full of enthusiasm. No great deeds for GOD and for man ever were done without strong enthusiasm. We are not required to show our enthusiasm by slaying a man, as Moses had need to do; but we are required to slay many a spiritual enemy with uncompromising severity and burning zeal. Do not be indifferent and lukewarm in any good thing. Be not half-hearted citizens, cold, indifferent Churchmen, languid Christians. Be full of zeal; not only be *willing* to put yourselves to trouble for the honour of GOD and the welfare of your brethren, but do actually *take* the trouble, and even hunt out ways in which you can do good.

Be instant in season and out of season; and yet, if GOD call on you to wait ere you can carry out any grand and noble purpose, then be as fully possessed by the spirit of patience as by the spirit of enthusiasm, and wait. But do not wait in idleness; there can never be need for that. Keep the sheep, as Moses did, for forty years; that is, do diligently all the little lowly simple duties of life; and, doing *them* with faithfulness and enthusiasm, you will thereby be trained to higher work, and will get it given to you to do in GOD's own good time.

Cultivate and foster holy zeal, but with it cultivate a *great patience*. It is only the truly enthusiastic who have hope enough to wait, only the truly

patient who can keep alive a seemingly frustrated enthusiasm.

The cultured courtier, the man accustomed to kings' palaces, one "mighty in wisdom, and in all the learning of the Egyptians," was content to be a keeper of sheep for forty years; and yet many untold, unlearned boys and girls murmur sorely because home-duties and the ordinary calls of social life restrain them from rushing headlong into some scheme which seems to them great and noble, and by the carrying out of which they imagine they can electrify the world. Depend upon it, if you be indeed fitted for high work, GOD *will* in His own time make the way plain for you to enter upon it. If you be fired with holy enthusiasm, that is indeed *one* sign that you are moved of GOD to some lofty work; but, nevertheless, you can test the stability and vitality of that enthusiasm chiefly by your willingness to wait: if it will not stand the trial of opposition and delay, it is, after all, but a mere spark, and not a vital feeding flame.

Now, one thought more must we think out, and it is the root of the whole matter. Let us think of that deliberate choice—of good rather than of evil, of GOD instead of Satan—which Moses made. You may perhaps think, and in some degree think truly, that *you* cannot make such a choice as Moses made, because the conditions of your lives and his

life are so different. *You* have not been brought up in Egypt, but in the Church of the living God. You were rescued by the waters of baptism from the soul-killing slavery of Satan, as surely as Moses was saved by the waters of the Nile from the murderous knife of the emissaries of Pharaoh. By a great venture of faith, greater even than that of Amram and Jochebed, your parents placed you in the ark of the Church, and promised for you that you would renounce the Devil and all his works, and that you would keep God's holy will and commandments all the days of your life. All of you here present renewed those promises at confirmation, and in many a subsequent communion. Also, you have joined a society within the vast society of the Church, one that has for its objects the helping to a stricter keeping of the baptismal vows, and a closer adherence to all parts of the Christian covenant. How, then, can *you* choose between God and Satan, for are you not already on the LORD's side? This is indeed true, thanks be to God; but, nevertheless, there will often come occasions in life in which you must make choice between good and evil, or, at the least, between the higher and the lower.

Soldiers of an earthly crown are pledged to the service of that crown and of their country; but do you imagine that the temptation to unfaithfulness

and cowardice never arises in their minds? There often come moments when the heart of the bravest soldier sinks within him at the thought of the dangers and hardships of his life, and he would fain fly from them all were he not restrained by honour and honesty; by patriotism and enthusiasm. Such moments of fierce temptation must come to every Christian,—pledged soldier of the Cross though he be,—when the toils and difficulties and hardships of the Christian life cause his heart to sink within him, and he longs with wild, eager longing for the pleasures, or what appear to be the pleasures, of sin.

Many a time in life you will come to a stand-point when you must choose, and that quickly, whether you will be faithful to your vows, or whether you will cast them aside for worldly advantage or pleasure.

In matters of everyday life you will often need to make a choice, if not between actual open good and evil, yet between a higher and lower standard of holiness, between self-indulgence and self-denial. For instance, a worldly pleasure presents itself, one perfectly innocent and lawful in itself, but coming at an unsuitable season, when consistency as a Churchman requires of you retirement from the world; you must then choose between the amusement and the consistency.

Again, you see something which you would like

to buy for your own personal gratification, something not necessary, but a beautiful and desirable possession. You can honestly afford to buy it, and to do so would be no sin, no folly even. I would not for a moment say or have you think that it would be either; but it may so happen (for it has so happened to many a person) that at the very same time a case of great distress comes before you, a sudden call for spiritual or temporal help wherein money is needed, and you cannot afford to give that money-help, *and* also buy the beautiful and desirable object. Then, if one impulse to self-denial arise in your heart, one lightning-flash of conviction shine upon your mind, that it would be a better and holier deed to give the aid; then indeed a standpoint will have been reached; the moment for choice will have come, and you must make the choice.

To please yourself is often a good deed, but to aid and benefit others is *always* a better deed; and so you can make the choice between that which is good and that which is better.

But often you will have to choose, not merely between the *good and the better*, but between obvious and undeniable good and evil. You will remember what I suggested to you when we talked about Lot. Two situations in life may be offered to you—one in which your spiritual health would

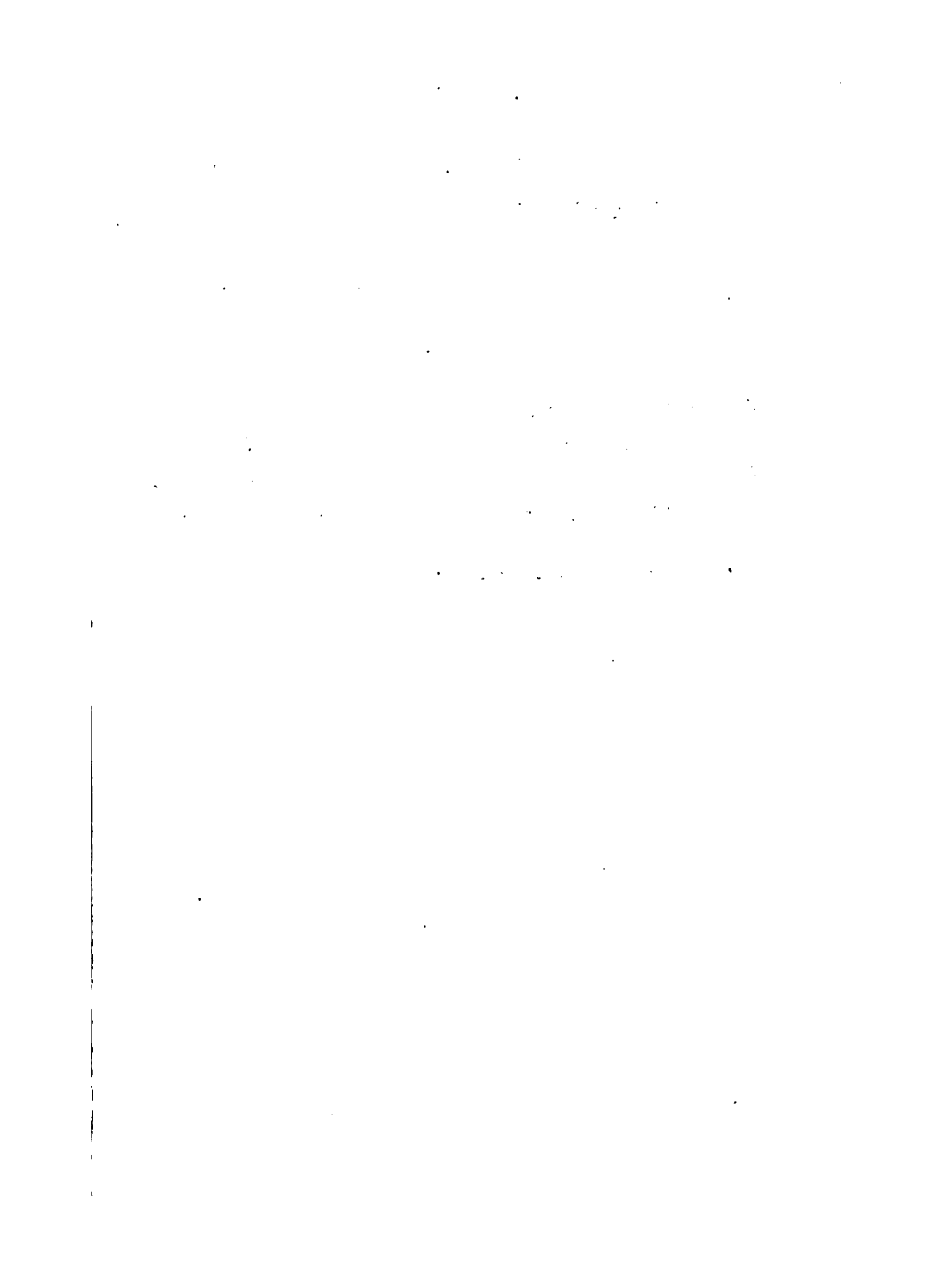
suffer and your worldly condition prosper ; the other in which your worldly state would suffer and your spiritual state flourish. In such a case, you must, like Moses, choose the good, or, like Lot, choose the evil. You must choose between God and the world.

Again, you will often have to choose between the slothful desire to lie in bed on a cold morning, though perfectly well in health, and the call to the house of God to meet CHRIST in His Feast of Love ; or between the not unnatural wish to take a drive or a walk on a bright Sunday at the hour when you might be at divine service or doing some work of mercy peculiarly suited to God's holy day.

In worldly business, if a conviction arise in your heart that you are using some means of advancement not perfectly and literally honest, then a moment for choice will have arrived, and the choice must be made. In all these cases which I have put before you, and in many others, you must deliberately choose the higher or the lower standard, the good or the better ; or, more solemnly still, the absolute good with Moses, or the absolute evil with Lot.

It is terrible to know that we have each of us this great power of choice—that we can accept God or the Devil—that we can prefer righteousness or iniquity. Try to realise this terrible

responsibility, which is also, nevertheless, a wonderful privilege—the privilege of free will, that proves you no slaves—and train yourselves by daily, hourly endeavour to be *ready* to meet any of the crises of life, to have your weapons ready polished for the hour of temptation, remembering always that GOD is your help; that in being His pledged soldiers and His baptized children you need never fight alone, but can always claim, as of right, the help of your CAPTAIN in slaying every spiritual enemy, and the loving guidance of your FATHER in choosing your path.



TALK VII.

JOSHUA.

THE SECRET OF MORAL STRENGTH—THE LORD'S SOLDIER.

WE shall now have to deal with characters in many respects wholly different from those who have hitherto engaged our attention. The work of being leaders in "the wars of the LORD," as the battles of the Israelites against the various Canaanitish nations are often called, was very different from that which had occupied the early patriarchs; and the work being so remarkable, it was natural that the chief workers in it should also be remarkable, with strongly marked, unmistakable characteristics. There were many of these warriors, but I purpose talking of only three amongst them—Joshua, Gideon, and Samson.

Of these, the first undoubtedly, both in priority of time and pre-eminence of character, is Joshua, of whom we shall speak to-night. He had a large share of physical courage, without having which a man could not be a valuable leader in battle; but he acquired also that which is a great deal grander and better worth having—moral courage,

that quality which is composed of two seemingly opposite things—fear and confidence : I mean fear of wrong-doing, and confidence that strength will be given for right-doing. We hear of many of Joshua's actions, but comparatively few of his words, for he was evidently a man "still of his tongue" (to quote our noble modern poet Tennyson), though for that very reason, when he did speak, his words were strong and to the purpose.

The first mention that we have of him is in his character as warrior, when, in the first year after the Exodus, the Amalekites came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. We then hear of Joshua for the first time, but evidently he was already well known to Moses ; for he says to him, "Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek." Moses knew not only the young man's bravery and skill in warfare, but knew also his fitness to be a leader of men, his discernment, and his power of making wise choice.


There are two points to which, before going farther, I wish to draw your attention. In writing the account of the fight with Amalek, Moses calls the young soldier, not by the name of Oshea, which was the one he then bore, but by that which was shortly after given to him, "Joshua," the Hebrew form, as you know, of the all-precious name of JESUS or SAVIOUR. From his very name you cannot fail to recognise the typical character of Joshua.

The other point is, that Joshua was of "good family," in the best sense of the term ; he was of the tribe of Ephraim, and therefore a descendant of Joseph, and influenced, none of us can tell how greatly, by the character and conduct of his truly great and godly ancestor. The advantage of a good lineage is great ; the knowledge that he comes of decent-living, GOD-fearing forebears is, or ought to be, a strong incentive to a man to lead a decent, GOD-fearing life himself, so that he may not disgrace his honest name. But even if a man have not the blessing of good and godly ancestors, he can, if he go the right way to work, himself become the godly ancestor of generations yet unborn ; so each of you has it open to you either to continue true to the traditions of your race, or to be the founder of a family which your conduct whilst here on earth may benefit or inspire.

On the second occasion of his coming before us, Joshua appears in a different character—that of "*the minister of Moses*"—the man chosen to attend him when he went up into Mount Sinai to be taught of God, and to receive from Him the moral law which was to be man's guide for all time. The Holy Scripture does not tell us where Joshua remained during the forty days and nights in which Moses held secret intercourse with GOD, nor whether he shared his miraculous fast.

Many learned commentators think that we may infer from this silence that Joshua was close to Moses during the whole period, and that he fasted with him. At any rate, as Moses came down from the mount after his first visit thither, he was certainly his companion ; and now, for the first time, we hear him speak. He speaks as a soldier, saying, "There is a sound of war in the camp." Probably, there was in his mind a slightly regretful feeling that he was not doing his life's work and following the instinct of his nature by fighting in defence of his brethren.

You all remember the next occasion on which Joshua comes before us—the remarkable occasion of the searching out of the Land of Canaan by twelve spies, of whom he and Caleb were two. You also remember how badly ten of these spies behaved ; how they tried to frighten their brethren, and to hinder them from going up to possess the promised land and carrying out GOD's command, whilst Caleb and Joshua alone showed full confidence in GOD, the latter, according to his usual characteristic, not so much by word as by deed ; and they received their reward, for they alone of all the congregation who were more than twenty years old (with the exception of the priests and Levites) did not die in the forty years' wander-



ings in the deserts, but ultimately went up to possess the Holy Land.

When Moses was about to die (he also having forfeited the right to enter Canaan), Joshua was formally set apart and consecrated for the offices of leader and captain of the Israelites. GOD said of him that he was "a man in whom was *the spirit* ;" and GOD having so spoken, what need is there for any word of human commendation ?

Joshua was put into the place of Moses, and had to hold, not only those offices which Moses had held, and fulfil the duties which he had faithfully fulfilled, he had also other offices given to him, and was called upon to serve GOD and the people of GOD in ways in which his great forerunner had not been called to serve.


He was not only the leader and ruler of the people, and the human representative of GOD to them ; he was also the captain of the Lord's host and the commander-in-chief of the vast armies of Israel ; and all of these various arduous duties he nobly performed.

As time advanced with him, he seems to have grown out of his natural reserve and love of silence, for when it became necessary for him to talk, he talked well and to the purpose. But the most noticeable feature in his character was his confidence in GOD ; *that* never seemed to fail him.

He acknowledged his GOD in all matters, appealed to His will on all occasions; and when he knew that will, obeyed it without murmur or question. Doubt and anxiety must often have clouded his mind, but he never allowed those feelings to escape his lips; he trusted himself and his brethren to the wise leading of his FATHER, and fought at His command, or stayed his hand at His bidding. He was in all points a soldier; and, like the Roman centurion whose sick servant was healed by the LORD JESUS, he was "a man under authority, and having soldiers under him;" in other words, a man who himself lived under strict discipline, and exercised strict discipline upon all who came within the scope of his influence.

As long as the strong yet tender hand, and firm yet just will of Joshua ruled them, the Israelites never swerved from their allegiance to GOD. We are told that "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua," meaning by "the elders" those contemporaries of his who had governed under him during his lifetime, and who were thoroughly acquainted with his system of administration.

It is probable that by nature Joshua was not a self-reliant, self-confident man; for when Moses spoke to him concerning the work that he would have to do as his chosen successor in office, he used twice over



these remarkable words: "Be strong, and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed." So also after the death of Moses did the LORD Himself address him; and again, his brethren the children of Israel, when assuring him of their obedience, said, "Only be strong, and of a good courage." I think the frequent repetition of these words shows us that though Joshua might have had no *physical* fear, he had heart-sinking dread as to the work before him—the dread which springs from humility, and which GOD can make very strength. He had so little confidence in self that he needed to be exhorted to courage; but once he had rooted his confidence in the right place, in the heart of GOD, he feared no longer, and when near the end of his life could say boldly, that whatever other people might choose, he chose to serve the LORD. "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

There was no weakness nor hesitation there, but the resolute will that, knowing in whose all strong will it can surely repose, does not ride out upon vain "perhappes," not even on the often lawful "I will *try*," but says boldly, gaining strength in and by the very assertion, "We WILL serve the LORD." His power of ruling others shows itself in these words, "*I and my house*." He was sure of the discipline in which his household was kept, and

knew that he had trained its members by precept and example to conformity of opinion and practice with himself, to oneness of mind upon all vital matters ; and that was perhaps the more remarkable, inasmuch as the household must have consisted of distant relations and servants, for he never married. Perhaps the greatness of his public work left him no time for thoughts of domestic happiness, or perhaps he wished to offer to the LORD as a voluntary sacrifice "the great venture of a lonely life,"—the sharp self-sacrifice of the single state, which (to those who are assuredly called of GOD thereto) is a holy state.

It may be that, being the leader in the conquering battles of the LORD, he shrank from gaining much temporal personal advantage by the death of the LORD's enemies ; being set apart as a great exterminator of rebellious men, he did not wish to build to himself a house upon the slain bodies of the foes that duty compelled him to destroy. The thought of the loneliness of his domestic life, of his single state, may perhaps show you somewhat at least of the need that he had of strong confident courage.

In his work and in his character Joshua was a remarkable type of the LORD JESUS, the real spiritual Captain of the spiritual Israel. Joshua began his official life by crossing the river Jordan : CHRIST

began His ministry by baptism in that same Jordan. Joshua commanded twelve stones to be taken out of Jordan and set up as memorials in Gilgal: JESUS immediately after His baptism began to choose His twelve Apostles, whose names are written on the twelve foundation-stones of His Church below and His Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 14). As soon as Joshua had set up the stones at Gilgal, he was commanded by GOD to make knives of stone and circumcise the people. This act is recognised by the Fathers as figurative of the work of JESUS, the true "stone, elect, precious," who alone can circumcise the heart.

Baptism is not only a baptism by water, but a circumcision of the heart, and we cannot enter Canaan unless we have both. After the circumcision came the eating of the Passover, the first that the Israelites had celebrated since they had been turned back to wander in the wilderness. The feeding on CHRIST, who is the true Paschal Lamb, follows after baptism, and CHRIST Himself declares that eating of His Flesh and drinking His Blood in the Blessed Sacrament of His altar is the necessary preparation for that eternal life of which Canaan was a mere type and figure.

In these and many other points which you may study out for yourselves was Joshua a marked type of our better JOSHUA, even JESUS; but at this present

I would conclude by quoting some of the dying words of this great patriot-warrior:—

“Ye have seen all that the LORD your GOD hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your GOD is He that hath fought for you. For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong; no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.”

You see by these words that Joshua gave all the glory of his conquests to GOD, and said but little of himself; only, remembering, perhaps, his own fears and misgivings when first called to his great work, he repeats to them the injunction that his old friend and master Moses had given to him; and not Moses only, but also the greater Master and Friend, even the LORD GOD whom he loved and served:

“Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses.”

You young men need all the courage that you can gain from GOD for your fight against sin, the world, and the Devil. The enemies of the LORD must be slain, His name must be hallowed, His service must be done; and there is much on all sides to make these imperative duties painful and arduous. The fight is a fierce one, the work difficult and wearisome, the path an uphill path to the very

end of life ; and thinking of all this, and of your own exceeding weakness, you might be tempted to grow faint-hearted ; but when so tempted, let the words which nerved Joshua ring in your ears—the words which in extreme old age he could confidently repeat to the young men around him—“ Be ye therefore very courageous.”

TALK VIII.

GIDEON.

CALLED FROM LOWLY TO LOFTY WORK.

THERE has scarcely ever been a notable and distinguished person, whether of past ages or still upon the earth, of whom we can say that he or she was or is wholly satisfactory; not one not in some sense disappointing. Thus it must be because of the frailty of human nature; a frailty of which we are so well aware, that were we to read in a biography of a perfect man or woman, we should contemptuously deem the writer of the biography unworthy of our confidence, and all that might be really true in the book we should be inclined to doubt because of its manifest untruths.

If we acknowledge that no human being in this comparatively enlightened age can wholly satisfy us, no Christian living in this glorious dispensation of the *SPIRIT* fail to disappoint us in some aspects of his character, we can all the more readily perceive the faults and failings of notable people of past ages, and ought indeed to be better able to make excuses for their disappointing defects and shortcomings,

remembering that they did not live in times so enlightened as are ours. With this feeling of willingness to make all just excuse, to accept and admire the good whilst regretting the evil, we must always approach the reading of the lives of Biblical heroes.

Whilst finding much to admire and reverence in the characters that I hope soon to bring before you, we shall find also many traits deeply to be regretted, many actions to be carefully shunned by us; and yet the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD has told us to consider these men as witnesses to the truth of His revelation.

You will find that this is so by turning to the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where, in the thirty-second verse, the inspired writer, after having spoken at some length of Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and other worthies, says, "Time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, . . . who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, and stopped the mouths of lions;" and at the end of the grand summing up of the virtues and sufferings of these and other men the writer speaks of them as the "great cloud of witnesses," whose example should spur us on to "running with patience the race that is set before us."

Let us then inquire into the life and character of

Gideon, observing first those things wherein he was excellent, and noticing later the defects which proved him a mere man, and a man living in an age far less blessed with opportunities of doing good and avoiding evil than is our own.

The sixth chapter of the Book of Judges opens, as, alas! several chapters in that book do open, with the sad announcement, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD." You know what forms that "evil" took to itself. First, indifference to the honour of GOD, as shown by neither teaching the knowledge of true religion to the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan, nor exterminating those who would not acquire that knowledge; secondly, as a natural consequence of this idle indifference, came gradual participation in the idolatries of their neighbours; and, finally, absolute union by marriage with those idolaters.

From listless indifference towards the honour of GOD spring many and many a grievous sin, the rise and progress of which loving enthusiasm for Him would avert. GOD was not listlessly indifferent; but took infinite pain and trouble with these His children who forgot His law, and cared not for His honour and glory. He treated them *as children*; when they did well, He rewarded them; and when they did evil, He punished them. GOD generally punishes people by the exercise of the natural "law of con-

sequences." Certain causes have certain effects, both in the physical and the spiritual world. If you touch fire, you must be burnt; if you daub yourself with pitch, you will be defiled; if you do certain actions, the certain effects will follow. God seldom alters the natural course of His laws for any man's convenience. If a man persist in living a life of intemperance and debauchery, his bodily health will suffer: that suffering is not of God's sending; God simply permits the natural consequence of a violation of His physical laws to take place; the sin brings its own attendant and natural punishment. So it was with the Israelites throughout the whole course of their history as a nation; the peoples with whom they formed unholy and forbidden friendship became their chastisers: "they afflicted" the Israelites, whom they naturally despised for their cowardice and their indifference to the law of the God whom they professed to serve; and having had the power actually *given into their hands*, they used it treacherously and cruelly, as heathen people would be sure to do.

In the troubles and sorrows which they had brought upon themselves, the childish Israelites "cried unto the LORD." Little children often disobey their mothers, and snatch at a gleaming knife, or put their fingers into the bright fire-flame; and then, when cut or burnt, as the natural consequence of their naughti-

ness and folly, they run, weeping bitterly, to the very mothers whom they disobeyed; and those mothers, with the loving instinct taught by GOD Himself, comfort and help them, putting plaister to the cuts, or healing, cooling oil to the burns.

Taught by GOD Himself! Truly so; for He who, in His justice, permits man's sins to bear their natural consequences, and will not alter His unalterable natural laws, is yet so loving, so merciful, that He is ever ready to heal the sufferer, ever ready to pour in the oil of consolation into the smarting spiritual wounds, and to bind up the broken-hearted. Over and over again when the Israelites cried unto Him, "He gave help." He sent a strong deliverer to set them free. He gave them another chance, another and fresh start in life, another opportunity of being in the future what they "might have been" in the past.

Reading the history of the Israelites, how dare any man think that GOD *willeth* the death of one single sinner? His mercies are limitless; His grace is deeper than the sea, wider than the universe. Mark that it was always by human means GOD rescued and restored His ancient people. "He *will* not work without man's aid, and man *cannot* work without His aid."

On this special occasion about which we are now talking, the Israelites had fallen under the oppression

of the Midianites, who "destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites: and they cried unto the LORD." The LORD reminded them that they had not obeyed His voice, and had brought all this sorrow upon themselves; but nevertheless He set about delivering them.

He had marked out for Himself as His chosen instrument whereby to redeem Israel a man called Gideon, the son of Joash the Abi-Ezrite. There must have been something noteworthy in that young man, some excellence that God saw though none else did; and He sent His angel to him.

Where and how did the angel find him? *Doing his duty*,—fulfilling a lowly task under great difficulties; for he was threshing wheat, not in the open fields as was the wont, but in the small, covered "wine-press" to be found in every Oriental vineyard, in order to hide this little quantity of wheat from the greedy eyes of the oppressing and tyrannical Midianites.

Have you not noticed that almost all the men whom GOD has raised up to do great work for Him and their fellow-men have been called when in the midst of doing the simple duties of their "daily round"? Moses was keeping the sheep of his father-in-law when the vision of the burning-bush

was made manifest to him, and he was called to the work for which he had longed and waited patiently forty years. Saul was "seeking his father's asses" when Samuel met him and anointed him to be king of Israel. David was brought from keeping the sheep to be similarly set apart. The angel of the LORD came to this hidden hero, Gideon, as he laboured in fear and secrecy in the wine-press, and said to him—as centuries after Gabriel (who was probably this same angel) spake to the hidden, lowly maid of Nazareth—"The LORD is with thee," adding, what doubtless greatly amazed Gideon, "thou mighty man of valour."

It is evident from Gideon's answer where his thoughts had been. Whilst working his lowly work he had been thinking of the sorrows of his nation. When called a mighty man of valour, he is in no way uplifted or conceited; he says, "Oh! my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of?" "And the LORD looked upon him and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" Still Gideon is humble and modest; he replies, "Oh! my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Whereupon GOD promises to be

with him and to give him victory. Then Gideon, like a devout and well-taught Israelite, offered to do sacrifice, and asked that he might consider the acceptance thereof as a sign that he had indeed found favour in the sight of God. The sacrifice was accepted, as was proved by the fire miraculously brought out of the rock, and immediately Gideon was set to work on his father's household. First he was commanded to cast down the altar to Baal that Joash his father had built, and to cut down the grove that he had planted for purposes of idolatrous worship.

Now, I do not wish you to hold the idea, too prevalent now-a-days, that young people have a right to reprove and exhort their elders; nay, even their parents themselves. In many of the so-called "good little books" of the day (pernicious trash, most of them) there are wondrous tales of ungodly, drunken parents being converted by means of the talk of their pious little children.

A child, or even a young man, should be certain that he is called of God to exhort his elders before attempting to do so; but if, like Gideon, he be thus undoubtedly called, let him do his duty in the spirit of Gideon, promptly and fearlessly, even when there is much cause for fear; and also let him ever remember that example is better than precept, action more effectual than speech, and intercessory prayer the most effectual weapon of all.

Gideon's prompt and decisive action had the desired effect, and his father's heart was turned towards him, so that he defended him against the anger of the men of the city of Oprah, and had his own eyes opened to the folly and wickedness of idolatry.

Having thus begun at the right end, at home, where all reformers should begin, Gideon now sent forth messengers to call together the men of Israel to fight for the LORD against Midian.

In his humble self-distrust, he again asked of GOD a token of favour and acceptance, and in answer GOD caused the fleece of wool to be wet with dew when all around it was dry, and dry when the ground on which it lay was wet. Numbers of Israelites, incited by this valiant young man, assembled themselves to battle—too many, indeed (although few in comparison with the hosts of Midian), for the purpose of the LORD, which was to show the people that it was not by human might and power, but by His own arm that the victory was to be won.

GOD therefore taught to Gideon a way whereby he might distinguish the real enthusiastic warriors from the half-hearted and careless; two ways rather, as we learn by reading the following verses:—"Proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return

and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there. . . . Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself, likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. . . . By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and let all the other people go every man to his place. And he retained those three hundred men."

When all seemed ready for battle, the LORD bade Gideon, if he had still any fears as to the result, go down disguised into the enemy's camp, and listen to what conversation he might hear there. He did go, and heard one Midianite tell his comrade a dream which he said he had dreamed, of a barley-cake tumbling into the camp and overthrowing a tent; and of this GOD made a parable or allegory that comforted the heart of Gideon, and gave him courage to attack with his mere handful of men the vast host of Midian "that lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude."

Stratagem was used at the outset of the fight; lighted lanterns were concealed in pitchers, the breaking of the pitchers suddenly revealing the lights; and the simultaneous blast of trumpets so alarmed the Midianites, that in confusion each of their number fought against his own fellow, and "the host fled." The lamps and the trumpets proved powerful weapons, and have ever been held symbolical of the preaching of the Word, the proclamation of the Gospel of JESUS.

Gideon sent a message to the men of Ephraim to come down against the Midianites. They came, and after slaying two of the great princes, Oreb and Zeb (names familiar to all singers and readers of the Psalms), grumbled against Gideon that they had not been called upon earlier. Gideon answered them with courteous tact and kindliness, giving literally the "soft answer that turneth away wrath." He said unto them, "What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? GOD hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeb; and what was I able to do in comparison of you?" Then their anger was abated towards him when he had said that. In this transaction we see the gentleness which is almost always to be found in a truly brave man; but it was immediately followed by an action show-

ing another side of his character—his unflinching severity when severity was necessary.

He asked the inhabitants of Succoth and of Benue! to give bread to the men of his army, who were "faint," and yet were "pursuing their enemies." A noble lesson this for us. Though we too may be faint in body and soul, sick almost unto death of the long, sore strife, let it ever be said of us that we are "pursuing," that is, following after, the spiritual enemies pride, rebellion, self-will, all sins and failings which do so easily beset us, hunting them down so that their power may be weakened and their chances of returning against us lessened.

The men of Succoth and of Benue! refused to give bread to the faint yet pursuing host of Israel; and severely indeed, when the campaign was concluded, did Gideon punish them for this churlish refusal. From the terrible doom which fell upon Succoth and Benue! we may take solemn warning. Do not we sometimes refuse to come "to the help of the LORD against the mighty"?

This refusal can be rendered in various ways: either we refuse money to forward the cause of missions, to build churches, to send out teachers abroad and at home, and thus do we give no bread to the faint yet pursuing servants of GOD who are fighting His spiritual battles; or we ourselves strike no blow for Him on the field

of our own hearts, and make no endeavour to fight on His side against the Devil and his evil works.

For either or both of these failures in duty (and they almost always go together) we may reasonably expect to be taught (as we are told that the men of Succoth were "taught") by the thorns and briars of affliction that GOD will use, in order to make us more zealous in the future, more willing to do Him service.

So great had been the victory won by Gideon that the grateful Israelites wished to make him their king; but faithful Gideon would not accept the honour lest he should seem to dishonour GOD. "I will not rule over you; neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you."

So far as we have as yet followed Gideon's history, we have found everything to be admired, and, allowing for the difference in manners and customs between his times and ours, everything to be imitated; but now we shall find imperfection creeping in, and the first sign thereof is in his making an ephod of the ornaments which he had taken from the Midianite princes. The ephod was, as you remember, a priestly garment to be worn by the priests alone.

On this matter let us read the opinion of two learned bishops of our Church, one of whom

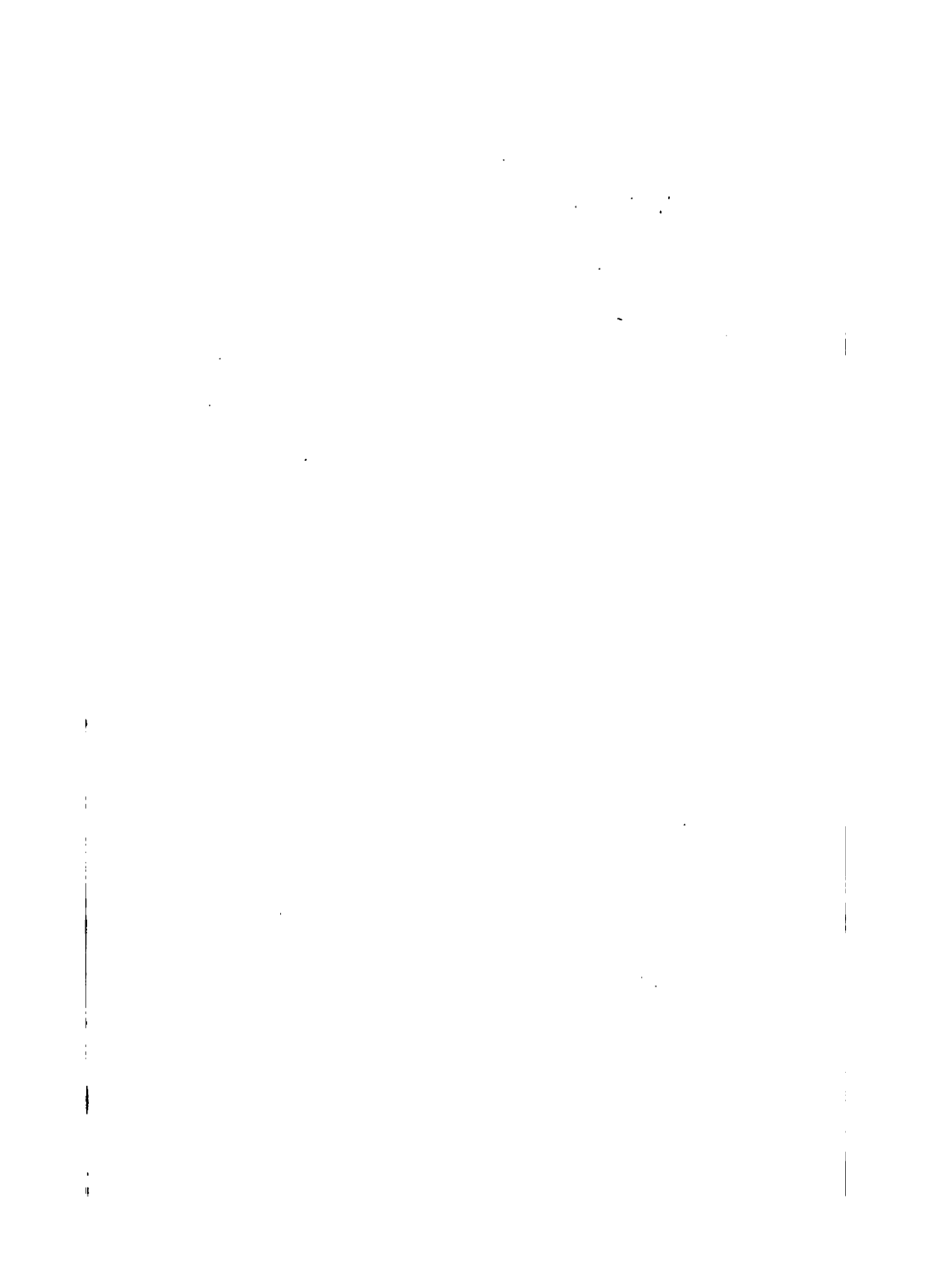
lived in the last century ; the other has but lately been called "Home." The former, Bishop Hall, says quaintly, "It were pity that good intentions should make any man wicked : here they did so. Never man meant better than Gideon in his rich religious ephod, yet this very act set all Israel on whoring after idolatry. GOD had chosen a place and a service of His own. When the wit of man will be trying to overplease GOD with better services than those of His choosing, it turns to madness and ends in mischief."

Our modern theologian, Bishop Wordsworth,* writes, "What Gideon did in this particular respect was contrary to GOD's law, for the ephod was to be worn by the priest alone, and by means of it GOD revealed His will to the priest. Gideon's intention was not evil, but his act was an occasion of evil to the people. He was probably grieved and angry at the bad state into which the priesthood had fallen, and was elated by his many visions and the favours that GOD had shown him into setting up a separate ephod for himself ; which should be a warning to us not to allow the defects and weaknesses of GOD's ministers make us resort to irregular and unlicensed religious services for the attainment of even good ends."

* Bishop Wordsworth's death has occurred since the writing of this paper.

But if Gideon erred with well-meaning intention in the matter of the ephod, he sinned grievously in multiplying wives to himself. A plurality of wives was never countenanced by God, though sometimes, in those early ages, suffered by Him, because of the hardness of men's hearts. God's will has always been that a man have but one wife at a time, and a woman but one husband.

Whilst regretting these shortcomings of Gideon, let us try to imitate his excellences—his readiness to obey God's call, his zealous love for his nation, his courteous speech, his just severity against evil, and, above all, his faith in God, so that we also may ever be ready to fight on the side of the LORD against His enemies and ours, against the Devil and his crew of fierce sins and temptations, sure that the LORD will go forth with us and nerve our arm for the fight, and that He will hereafter give to us the victor's crown.



TALK IX.



*SAMSON AND SAMUEL, THE TWO
NAZARITES.*

STRENGTH OF BODY—STRENGTH OF WILL.

SAMSON.

TO-DAY, I would wish our thoughts to be turned to Samson, the last figure in our chosen group of warriors; not as taken by himself alone, but as compared and contrasted with another Nazarite, greater than he, namely, Samuel, the prophet of the LORD.

Both these men were remarkable in the circumstances of their birth, both coming, as it were, out of due time; both were life-vowed Nazarites, and both did great service to Israel; but here the points of resemblance cease, whilst the points of contrast as regards personal character are so many that it will be necessary to deal with each man individually, speaking more of Samuel than of Samson, inasmuch as more lessons immediately beneficial to ourselves can be derived from the contemplation of his character than from that of the earlier Nazarite.

If we had to acknowledge to feelings of disappointment in reading of Gideon, how much keener and deeper must be our regret in thinking of Samson! His birth was so wonderful, his early exploits so brilliant, that it is sad indeed to be compelled to consider many of the deeds of his later years as warnings rather than as examples. But even whilst being thus keenly disappointed, we should ever keep in mind the singular nature of the circumstances under which he acted, and the vast difference between the manners and customs of his country and of the age in which he lived and those of our own country and time.

You remember the circumstances of Samson's birth. Manoah, a man of the tribe of Dan, and his wife, were probably old in years; certainly, they suffered under what was counted amongst the Israelites as a great affliction, that of having no children. Most likely they had long given up the hope of being blessed with offspring; but, nevertheless, there one day appeared to the wife (whose name is not given to us) the angel of the LORD, telling her that she should bear a son, and commanding that that son should be dedicated to God in a very special manner above and beyond that in which all first-born sons were dedicated, namely, that he should be a vowed Nazarite from birth to death: nay, even more, she herself was

bidden to take the vows of a Nazarite and keep them until the day that her child should be born. If you will turn to the sixth chapter of Numbers, you will see what was the nature of these vows, and will perceive that they involved considerable self-denial and self-restraint.

Again the angel appeared both to the woman and her husband Manoah, and on their offering in his presence a burnt-sacrifice, we are told that "he did wondrously; for it came to pass when the flame burnt up towards heaven from the altar that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar, and Manoah and his wife looked on and fell on their faces to the ground."

Although we are not told the name of Manoah's wife, we know that she was a woman full of good sense and faith; for on Manoah being terrified at the wondrous doing of the angel, and saying to her, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God," she replied, "If the LORD were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would He, as at this time, have told us such things as these." Whenever we may feel tempted to fall into what Bishop Forbes called "the devilish sin of despair," into the imagination that GOD does not love us and that we are none of His, let us remember the wise

words of this nameless woman, which may be adapted for use in modern life somewhat after this fashion. Has not GOD received many an offering of ourselves to Him in Holy Communion, and accepted many a work done from love to Him? and hath He not showed us wondrous things in His incarnation, nativity, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension, and in His dealings with our own souls individually? Can He then be pleased to kill us?

To quote again from Bishop Forbes—"The very fact that GOD has spared us to the beginning of this day ought to infuse into us the deepest gratitude, and a constant hope that He *never will* leave us nor forsake us." Let us then be thankful for the brave, sensible words of Samson's unnamed mother, and may the true spirit and meaning of them be ever in our hearts!

The brief life of Samson, not exceeding forty years, was as remarkable through its course as it was in its beginning. Almost from infancy he was a warrior, and the manifestation of the SPIRIT of GOD within him first appeared in the camp of Dan, whence the soldiers of Israel were ever keeping up a sort of predatory warfare against the Philistines, the people who were at that particular period oppressing them.

It was a wild and lawless age, of which the

times of even such fierce Highland chieftains as the "Wolf of Badenoch," and "Black Duncan," and of the lords of the Saxon Heptarchy may be taken as only a faint transcript.

There is much childlikeness combined with much animal ferocity observable in the leaders and prominent men of uncivilised and uncultured countries and times, and thus Samson was in some aspects of his character as simple as a child, and in others as ferocious as a wild animal of the woods.

His marriage with a Philistine woman, although it displeased his parents, seems to have been a matter of policy, and possibly by direction from Gon; but his subsequent entanglement with Delilah seems to have been in all respects blameworthy, and was the primal cause of his ultimate ruin.

Fiercely brave though this man was, and stronger than all men in physical strength, he was morally weak and easily led into impurity. The very solemnity of his life-vow to resist the smallest opening to self-indulgence in the matter of strong drink should have made him the more guarded against self-indulgence in a form more evil and more dangerous in its consequences than even that of drunkenness.

Many a time, in a series of adventures which would read almost like a fairy-tale did we not know that they are inspired fact, did the Philistines try to

learn the secret cause of Samson's marvellous bodily strength, and yet were baffled at every point, until, by his own weakness of will and his powerlessness to resist the blandishments of an evil woman, he himself put the long-coveted information into their hands; and we cannot wonder that they were not slow to take advantage thereof; but they did so with great cruelty, putting out the eyes of the man from whom they had taken strength, and shutting him up in prison fast bound in fetters of brass. Have you ever seen a caged eagle, and noted its drooping and downcast yet dignified air of misery? Something like that of a caged eagle must have been the aspect of the once free-footed, impulsive, athletic young chieftain, that almost wild hunter of the woods, when confined in his prison at Gaza.

There are few figures in all history more pathetic than that of Samson in his prison; and, as you are aware, Milton, that mighty genius, wrote one of his finest poems on the old tale of the imprisonment and death of Samson—a story in which pathos and the wild soul-stirring exultation of victory are strangely and inextricably blended,—one which so inspired also the heart of Handel that out of it arose a grand oratorio, second in beauty and power only to that of the “Messiah,” the world's masterpiece of sacred music.

We can, however, gain more important lessons

from the history of Samson than the mere charm of wild adventure and daringly brilliant exploits; than the pathos of seemingly total defeat and irretrievable loss; more even than the exultation of the victorious death which followed in due time upon that defeat; for Samson, in common with all notable men of the older dispensation, was, in some parts of his life and in some traits of his character, a type of CHRIST; a faulty and imperfect figure certainly, not such an one as was Joseph or Joshua, but still a faint foreshadow in his miraculous birth, and more especially in his victorious death, of the world's great Redeemer.

From out of the early incidents of Samson's adventurous, stirring life the first fathers and divines of the Christian Church have extracted much spiritual meaning. You remember that "with nothing in his hand" he slew "a young lion as he would have rent a kid," and that "he told not his father and mother what he had done."

After a time he turned "to see the carcase of the lion, and behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion, and he took thereof and went on eating, and came to his father and his mother, and he gave them, and they did eat; but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion."

On this an old writer says, "Out of the Lion

of the tribe of Judah came forth *in death* the life and food of His people. From Death, the eater that devoureth all things, hath come forth meat, even He who hath said, 'My Flesh is meat indeed.'"

With that curious instinct which we sometimes notice in children of concealing anything that greatly moves them, Samson, who was never wiser in spirit than a child, did not tell his parents of the slain lion or of the honey obtained from its carcase; and concerning this, an eminent modern writer says, "You cannot, it may be, overcome as did Joshua, but yet you may as Samson; you have not gone forth victorious, but have yielded, and are beset with manifold temptations; yet you may call to GOD in your affliction, and the lion that meets you in the way may through faith be overcome, and yield you afterwards the sweetness of divine consolation, though father and mother, and those nearest and dearest to you, know nothing of your struggle or of your conquest, and are unaware of your deep spiritual comforts thence derived."

It was most especially in his victorious death that Samson may be counted a type of CHRIST. We see in him at that moment—in the blind captive—a figure of our Blessed LORD blindfolded and beaten; in him who rested upon the pillars of the Philistines' house a type of the SAVIOUR bound to the four-armed pillar of the cross, and there will-

ingly giving up his life, with no thought of revenge to mar His stupendous self-sacrifice, as the self-sacrifice of His frail earthly type was marred and defaced.

As a practical lesson of warning for ourselves, we may learn from Samson that weakness of will may lead us into many sins and dangers, and that we must strengthen our will by bringing it into ever-closer conformity to God's will. It is never wise to trifle or parley with temptation.

In his last fierce temptation Samson was not without the warning of a previous failure. He might have remembered how his Philistine wife had wiled out of him by her enticements the answer to the riddle concerning the honey found in the lion's carcase. Forgetting that on that occasion his will had yielded to a woman's, he did not resist Delilah by instant flight, which is often a proof of the truest courage. He stayed *unnecessarily* in the midst of danger, and played with the temptation to unfaithfulness to part of his vow as a Nazarite. He three times used needless stratagems (needless, because flight was the only needful course), and thereby weakened his own power of resistance, and rendered himself more liable to a final fall.

His physical strength lay in his hair, which, in accordance with the Nazarite vow, had never known a razor. *Though nothing in itself*, the extraordinary

length of his hair, as a sign of his extraordinary dedication to GOD, was by GOD permitted to be a power that lasted—with one terrible interval of loss—all his life.

Thus it is with us ; our power over our spiritual enemies lies in our dedication to GOD and acceptance by Him as His children at baptism ; and water, the *weakest* of all things in itself, was the outward sign of that dedication. We lessen the force of the hidden power that is in us every time that we parley with temptation and forget our baptismal vows ; but even though, like Samson, we yield ourselves so utterly to evil temptation that our strength goes from us, yet, like Samson's physical strength, it may, after deep humiliation and repentance, return to us again, so that when the last great trial comes, we may *in death prevail*, and through the very grave and gate of death we may, by Him who giveth victory, escape death and enter into life everlasting.

SAMUEL.

SAMUEL, "the asked of the LORD," as his name implies, was always "asking *from* the LORD." Throughout his long life he was a man of prayer, chiefly intercessory prayer. From birth to death he belonged to GOD, and in belonging to Him,

belonged also to His people. There seems to have been in him no thought of self; his whole life was passed in caring for and in serving others. First the aged Eli was the object of his care, then the people of Israel, with especial interest in Saul, their king, often and grievously though he and they disappointed him. In some respects there was a similarity between the circumstances of his birth and those of Samson's. He was given, as Samson was, to a woman who had long suffered under the grief of being childless. We are not told that Manoah's wife prayed for a son; but we know that Hannah so prayed, and that most earnestly, and in the best possible place in which to offer earnest prayer—the courts of the LORD's house.

Manoah's wife was commanded to dedicate her child in very special manner to the LORD. Hannah voluntarily offered hers to Him and His service, dedicating him doubly to the service of the Temple and to the life of a Nazarite.

The first she could not have done had not her husband been of the tribe of Levi. Samson, who was raised up to be a military deliverer of his brethren from the tyranny of the Philistines, went early, to learn his profession, into the camp of Dan.

Samuel, also destined to be a deliverer and helper of his countrymen, but in a wholly dif-

ferent fashion, was trained for his special work in the quietude of the high priest's abode at Shiloh, where were the Tabernacle and the Ark of the LORD. "He ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod;" in other words, he was clothed with the garment of prayer; he was trained to communion with GOD, to ceaseless intercourse with Him; and the result of that intercourse upon his whole nature was such that he was beloved of GOD, and even in his early childhood was chosen by Him as the recipient of wonderful tidings, and as the channel whereby they were to be communicated to the person chiefly concerned therein.

Samuel's conduct, when so highly favoured, is worthy of notice and of imitation. Being really a child, the childlike simplicity which he showed was charming and attractive. But there was much more than the charm of natural childlike ingenuousness; he showed also kindliness of heart, unselfishness, and considerateness for others above his years.

Samuel seems to have really loved his aged friend and master, for he readily rose three times from his bed in the depth of night to attend to the call that he believed to have been Eli's. No word of even natural childlike impatience escaped his lips; he was as ready, as obliging, as courteous at the third as at the first call.

When the sorrowful revelation of God's intended

punishment of the house of Eli had been made known to him, he was in no haste to communicate it. He had no idea of his own importance as the trusted recipient of a message from God, and no wish to blazon forth the honour that had been shown to him; but rather forgot self altogether, and thought only of his old master, shrinking from giving him pain, and needing to be questioned by him as to the nature of the LORD'S revelation. When so questioned, however, he told the whole truth with absolute faithfulness and candid simplicity. Doubtless this vision of the night and wonderful communion with God stirred deeply the heart already chastened by a dedicated life spent in the sanctuary with an aged man for chief companion and friend, and there Samuel rapidly developed into the wise prophet of whom it is said, "The LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground."

The life that in its beginning had been so quiet and uneventful was afterwards marked by rapid changes and great events, almost all of them painful and sorrowful. The defeat of the Israelites, the desecration of the Ark of God, the wholesale destruction of the family of Eli; these terrible events followed each other in swift succession.

In later years he was disappointed in his children, who "walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and perverted judg-

ment." We are not told that this conduct of his sons was in any sense Samuel's fault, as the evil behaviour of the sons of Eli had certainly been attributable to their father's weakness and over-indulgence.

The Israelites often grieved Samuel, and yet over and over again he interceded for them, as Moses of old had done, and, with rare hopefulness and charity of heart, kept on looking for their ultimate reformation. Although he greatly disapproved of their asking for a king to reign over them, yet, when the king had been raised up and anointed by his priestly hands, he instantly began to love him, and ever thenceforth did all in his power to help him in the straight path of GOD's commandments, and to help him to govern wisely his people and himself.

As far as Saul was capable of real love, he loved the prophet and clung to him; and even when it was no longer lawful for Samuel to visit Saul, the old loving-hearted Samuel "still mourned for him," and mourned over six years, doubtless often praying for him, until at last the LORD said, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil and go. I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king among his sons."

Was not that a sorrowful mission for the kind

old man, who still loved Saul and clung to him in his heart? It seemed hard that it was *he* who should have to set the seal to the LORD'S choice of a new king for Israel; nevertheless he obeyed the command, and, with that beautiful well-spring of hope ever bubbling up in his childlike old heart, he obeyed un murmuringly, doing faithfully his priestly office for the youth with the "ruddy and beautiful countenance," without giving vent to any word of his own private regret for the once "goodly" Saul.

Such a man then was Samuel, one so remarkable above most men for prayer, that the Psalmist singles him out as the chief among those that pray, when, in the ninety-ninth psalm, he says, "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among such as call upon His name." The prophet Jeremiah places him with Moses as a prevailing intercessor: "Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be towards this people." Samuel's own words to the rebellious Israelites show the prevailing unselfishness of his heart: "GOD forbid that I should cease to pray for you."

It was by affliction and disappointment that this loving, tender, prayerful spirit was nurtured and increased. His whole outer life was one succession of sorrows. As a little child, he was

sent away from his home and his parents, and in exile and comparative solitude was weaned from over-much love of the world and its vain shows. He was ever being disappointed in his own children, in the people whom he had to govern, and in the king of his anointing; but by all these disappointments and griefs he was not dismayed, but was ever brought nearer and nearer to his GOD in prayer.

"These constant prayers could not have been but for those constant occasions of sorrow." Every sorrow brought him a step higher in that life which is hid *in* God and is *with* GOD. "There are some plants, the leaves of which give out their sweetness and healing value only when pressed, bruised, and broken; so the soul under the pressure of grief and trial yields her healing power and intercedes for other souls in sorrow and distress; for it is indeed true that

'They best can bind
Who have been bruised oft.'

Let us take notice that Samuel's sorrows did not make him morose, gloomy, and unkind—did not even make him withdraw himself from intercourse with his fellow-men. He was no recluse, no visionary solitary; he worked almost as much as he prayed, leading a busy, toiling life as judge, prophet, and

priest; and all was done for others, nothing for himself alone; for—

“He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small.”

From the lips of Samuel we have words that we may well lay to heart as a practical lesson to guide us throughout life—words which have indeed passed into a proverb, and yet are never fully and faithfully acted up to. They were the words of reproof spoken by him to Saul, who had thought that he could please GOD after his own fashion instead of after GOD's fashion. “Behold, *to obey* is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” You remember that Saul had been commanded to exterminate the Amalekites, sparing not even the sheep and cattle, and that instead of yielding obedience to that order, he spared alive Agag, the Amalekite king, and also the best of the sheep and the oxen, and professed that he was going to offer the latter in sacrifice to GOD. His eyes must have been opened to his self-deception by the strong, trenchant words of the wise and ever-obedient prophet.

Let each one of us try to carry out the spirit of those words in every action of our lives as faithfully as did the first speaker of them, and do as he did the duty set before us, without seeking

about for work that in our fancy seems greater and nobler, and keep steadfastly and unflinchingly to our baptismal and all other lawful vows, even as he adhered to his Nazarite vows.

If we act thus, although also, like Samuel, we may have many sorrows and trials, they will but bring us nearer to GOD, closer to His heart of love, and by that closeness of union with the one Source and Spring of love we shall be filled and re-filled with love to our brethren, be zealous in their service, and ever ready to call upon the LORD in intercession for them, and for ourselves.

TALK X.

SAUL AND JONATHAN.

A BRIGHT BEGINNING—A SAD ENDING—FILIAL DEVOTION—
FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP.

SAUL is so naturally associated in our minds with Samuel, that even if he did not exactly follow him in order of time, with no prominent character coming between, we could hardly fail to take him as the subject of our thoughts and talk to-day—a talk which must of necessity be a sad one, because there are few characters set before us in the Holy Bible which excite more of regretful, sorrowful feeling than does that of Saul, whose public career began brilliantly and nobly, but ended in misery and comparative degradation.

As regards the actual sins which he committed, Saul was not worse than Gideon, Samson, even Jacob also, and others, whom the SPIRIT of GOD has bidden us count as being amongst His great “cloud of witnesses.” Wherein then lay his great inferiority to them? In his indifference to the law of GOD; in his want of love for Him, and, whilst being thus indifferent, in the hypocritical formalism with which he professed to serve Him.

We can never help contrasting in our thoughts the Saul of the Old Dispensation with the Saul of the New Dispensation, the former being in almost all respects a warning to us, the latter in almost every particular an example. The older Saul was great in his beginning and mean in his ending; Saul the younger began life ill from the Christian point of view, and ended it nobly. Saul the king persecuted David, who was an eminent type of the Messiah, the JESUS whom Saul of Tarsus persecuted in his youth, and afterwards served so faithfully.

Even in minute personal details there is much resemblance to be traced. Both men were of the tribe of Benjamin, and both were of impulsive, ardent natures; but the elder Saul was governed by his impulses, and "lacked the steady control of principle," whereas the later Saul governed his impulses, keeping his body in subjection, and bringing every wish and thought into obedience to the law of CHRIST.

Let us now trace the history of Saul, and endeavour to extract from it lessons of value for ourselves. First, it is necessary that you should once more try to realise the immense difference between the present state of society and that of the people of Israel at the time of the accession of Saul and for many succeeding years. Even amongst the dwellers in the walled cities there was little of what

we should now deem civilisation, but much of lawlessness and wildness of living, which of course attained to greater height in the tribes who inhabited the rocky fastnesses of the land. Wise and temperate though the representative rule of Samuel was, there was a want of consolidation, a want of unity of purpose in the governed, though not in the Governor, for He was God.

The unhappy Israelites for many ages of their history appear to have made scarcely any efforts to overcome their natural difficulty of believing in the unseen and spiritual. Their nature needed signs and outward tokens, and they would not try to surmount and improve that nature; they would not strive to gain the gift of faith in the Invisible, and thus it was that they longed for an earthly king. It was not so much that they did not believe in GOD as that they would not bring themselves to trust in His dealings with them because He Himself was unseen.

The desire to have an earthly king was not in itself wrong; it was wrong in *them* because they *had* a King, even the KING of Glory, the LORD of Hosts, the LORD mighty in battle; in Whom, because they could not see, feel, and hear Him, they would not make the effort to trust. The desire was not in itself wrong, and therefore GOD granted it, disappointed and grieved though He was at the motive which lay

behind and below the desire, namely, the unbelief in Himself. He granted them their heart's desire as He had granted them many a wish before, and that in the noblest, freest manner, according to *His* manner of giving, which is never grudgingly nor of necessity. As the people loved outward grandeur and rejoiced in size and splendour, He chose for their first king a man of goodly presence, of rare personal beauty, and great physical strength. These are the Bible words about him—"Saul, a choice young man and a goodly: there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upwards he was higher than any of the people."

He belonged also to a tribe which, though small, was renowned for its valour, and it is particularly stated that his father was a wealthy, influential man. According to modern ideas, Saul was not exactly young when he was chosen to be king of Israel, for he was at that time the father of a full-grown son; but you are aware that in the earlier ages of the world's history men lived longer than they are apt to do now, though very shortly after this period of which we now write life began to be much briefer.

If the years of men's earthly existence were longer than now, their youth remained much longer with them, and they were also in the habit of marrying

earlier ; so that although Saul was the father of the grown-up Jonathan, he is generally believed to have been only forty, or perhaps less, at the time of his election as king. When Saul first comes before our notice, it is as an example of good ; he was engaged in one of a man's best duties, that of service to his parent. Although himself the head of a family, he did not disdain to go, in company with a servant, to seek the strayed asses of Kish his father.

He spent nearly three days over the work, and then did not give it up in idleness, but, out of kindly solicitude for his father's anxiety, he said "to his servant that was with him, Come and let us return, lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us." Upon this there follows an incident which tells partly in Saul's favour, but that also shows too plainly the natural bent of his mind, which was ever towards superstition rather than to true living faith.

When his servant told him that there was a man of GOD in the city to which they drew near, and that peradventure he would counsel them as to their way, Saul seems to have thought of the man of GOD as merely a diviner, a sort of revealer of secrets, who must be paid for the service that would be asked of him. At the same time there was honest independence and true dignity in the unwillingness to receive a favour from a stranger without offering an equi-

valent. The wrong lay in regarding a man of GOD as a stranger, and his counsels as a mere worldly favour, a mere bit of clever divination which could be paid for. A straw, we are told, shows which way the wind blows; and this incident, in itself as slight as a straw, nevertheless shows that there was little, if any, of childlike faith in an unseen GOD in the heart of Saul, even at this, the best time of his life. When Samuel told him of his high destiny, there was in his conduct much of that proud humility which is no real humility at all; he speaks deprecatingly, not of his own unfitness, but only of the smallness of his tribe and the lowliness of his father's house.

There was none of the real sense of personal deficiency, such as was exhibited by Moses of old and by Gideon when called of GOD to do great and noble work. Gideon said of himself, "*I am the least in my father's house.*" Saul said, "*Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribes of Benjamin? Wherefore, then, speakest thou to me?*"

After Saul had been anointed by Samuel, he returned to his own home, and on his way thither he met a company of prophets; whereupon "*the SPIRIT of GOD came upon him,*" and "*he prophesied among them;*" then "*all that knew him aforetime said, What is this that is come unto the son*

of Kish? is Saul also among the prophets? . . . Therefore it became a proverb."

A great theologian wrote when he was in our Church upon these circumstances as follows:—"From this narrative we gather that his carelessness and coldness in religious matters were so notorious, that in the eyes of his acquaintances there was a certain strangeness and incongruity, which at once struck the mind, in his being associated with a school of the prophets." Now, I would wish you to fix your attention upon two points in particular: first, that, like Esau of old, Saul had glorious opportunities of serving GOD and being His faithful liegeman.

Esau was born with great privileges; Saul had great privileges thrust upon him; and both men first neglected, and then wilfully abused their opportunities and privileges. Saul, of all men of his age, dare not say in the day of judgment that he had no chance of doing well and of avoiding evil.

A grand fresh start in life, ere he had reached its prime, was given to him, and with him and in him to a whole nation; according to a common saying, "he had the ball at his feet." Secondly, I would have you notice what was the fault that marred his whole nature and ruined his whole life. It was indifference of heart towards GOD and His law: he cared as little about GOD and all good as Esau had cared, but he had more

worldly wisdom than had the hairy hunter, and therefore, for a time, he made a greater profession. The religion of the Israelites had now become solidified into a recognised system, with prescribed outward ceremonies, guarded by many defences, and separated by marked distinctions, outwardly as well as inwardly, from the other religions of the time. All this had not been so in the days of Esau; and as this exactly defined religion was the dominant one in the country, and as its Divine Object of worship had given Saul his kingship, he had sufficient worldly wisdom to conform outwardly to its requirements, and to acknowledge the obligations that it imposed.

Indeed, at brief periods throughout his life, his impulsive, ardent nature was touched inwardly by the exceeding beauty of its principles. I beg of you to take notice that that very impulsive ardour of nature was one of the many grand opportunities which he neglected to use. It in itself would have greatly aided all efforts after holiness of life, as it does aid every person who, possessing it, controls it by principle. It was especially given to Saul, as it had been to Esau, as a makeweight against his other natural characteristic of indifference; but he neglected the use of it, and, instead, only abused it by leaving it uncontrolled, whilst he cultivated assiduously his godless indifference of heart. Yet,

with all this real heart-indifference, Saul at times manifested great formalism in practice, and professed to honour God's law ; and in so far as this was mere pretence, he was less estimable than Esau, who made no pretence. But by degrees even this show of godliness slipped off from him ; and having in himself no root of principle, his outward conduct gradually grew less and less under his own control, and daily betrayed more and more plainly what manner of man he really was ; until at last he became to each member of his own court, according to the character of each, either an object of contempt, as in the case of his daughter Michal, or a source of bitter humiliating sorrow, as in that of Jonathan. His treatment of that faithful son shows how completely he had lost self-control, and forgotten even worldly policy, for he insulted him in the tenderest point ; and not Jonathan only, but even his very own self, by his passionate and probably unjust accusation against the wife of his youth, Jonathan's mother.

Saul's persistently malicious persecution of the unoffending and loyal David is well known to you all, and it shows clearly the rebellion of Saul's heart against the will of God. He hated David, simply because he knew that God had chosen him to be his successor on the throne, and hunted him down as a bird is hunted by the fowler, learning no lasting

lesson of good either from the wonderful ways in which GOD preserved the persecuted man, or from the magnanimity with which that man frequently forgave his cruelty.

We may say in extenuation that Saul was mad; but he had literally brought that madness upon himself by a long course of yielding to his natural evil passions. It was not such a madness as that that comes as a trial from the hand of GOD, but it had come through the agency of the Devil, who had, step by step, led his poor victim into that hapless state. At last Saul filled up the cup of his iniquity by his ruthless murder of the high priest and other priests, together with their innocent wives and children, and that simply because Ahimelech, the high priest, had shown favour to David.

Terrible indeed that the man who, when we first read of him, could show and feel great readiness to render a service to his father, and be solicitous to spare him anxiety of mind, should, at nearly the close of his life, be capable of such fierce barbarous cruelty as that of causing to be murdered in cold blood eighty-five unoffending men, the priests of the LORD; nay, worse still, an untold number of innocent women and children! "How are the mighty fallen!" And after this fashion, in kind if not in degree, will all

the mighty in their own strength fall—all who call not upon GOD to give and to renew their strength, and who do not live under strict self-discipline, and whose every action is not controlled by the revealed law of GOD and the inner breathings of His SPIRIT.

There remained but one evil thing more for Saul to do ere the consuming wrath of GOD fell upon him; namely, the throwing off even the outward, formal pretence of allegiance to GOD, and this was done by resorting for counsel and help to one who set GOD at defiance and endeavoured to be wiser than the Almighty.

The sin of witchcraft was one that GOD especially abhorred, and the very sin that in earlier and better days Saul had tried to save his subjects, and perhaps himself, from committing, by "putting away all those that had familiar spirits and wizards out of the land." Saul knew well how hateful witchcraft was to GOD, and how peculiarly harmful it was to the Israelites because of the superstition that seemed inherent in their nature, and yet he himself deliberately *sought out* the occasion for committing that sin. It did not come upon him as a sudden temptation; he absolutely walked into it of full intent and purpose, and so for ever cast off all pretence of serving the GOD whom his heart had never really loved.

Almost the first act of his official life as king was one of disobedience to the known law of GOD, as you will see if you read carefully the thirteenth chapter of First Samuel. Because Samuel, taught of GOD, tarried in his coming to Gilgal, and because the people of Israel had become alarmed at the prospect of doing battle against the Philistines, Saul ventured to offer burnt sacrifices unto the LORD — a sacred function, which, since the establishment of the Mosaic priesthood, was to be performed by the priests alone. It was for this act of disobedience that Saul was told that his kingdom should not continue, that his son should not sit on his throne. Early then, in his kingly career did Saul disobey GOD, and he ended it by openly defying Him, in seeking aid and counsel, not from Him, but from Samuel, through and by means of a woman who professed to have the power of "summoning spirits from the vasty deep," but who, poor wretch, was frightened enough when she found that Samuel really came, not, however, at her call, though she may have so imagined, but by the permission of GOD, in order that the death-blow might be given to all Saul's hopes of success against the Philistines, and of the permanent establishment of his own family in the kingly dignity.

And so the light, which at best had been but

that of a meteor, died out into darkness, and the heart-broken, brain-disordered Saul perished on the heights of Gilboa, because from first to last he had cared nothing for GOD, and had thrown away the magnificent chances put into his hand, and turned aside from the splendid destiny that had been offered to him.

We have grander chances and a more splendid inheritance. Shall we also lose them, as did Saul? or shall we try, with the help of GOD, so to act in time that in eternity we may enter into the full fruition of "the exceeding great and precious promises" made to us in CHRIST JESUS?

We cannot pass from speaking of Saul without some talk together about his son Jonathan. He was a young man whom young men ought to think about with much interest and kindly, reverential pity.

Have you ever thought much of his sorrowful, troubled life? and have you longed to imitate the beautiful virtues which he displayed in spite of the peculiar nature of the sorrows which he endured—sorrows which might, by a less godly man, have been taken as excuse for yielding to faults of the opposite nature to the good qualities that he showed?

I know few stories in sacred or profane history more pathetic than the life-story of Jonathan,

and the delicate reserve and reticence with which the inspired historian hints at its sorrows make it the more irresistibly pathetic, and give it a veil of sanctity which we should not too roughly draw aside.

When Saul was elected to be king of Israel, Jonathan, as his eldest son, naturally looked upon himself as heir to the throne, and he probably valued the position even more thoroughly than did the man who was in possession of the dignity, but who, having been suddenly and unexpectedly called thereto, had had no time to prepare himself for it, as had the one who was to succeed therein. It was not very long, however, before Jonathan learnt that his natural expectations had been vain and his preparations useless. Because of Saul's sin, the kingly dignity was to pass, at his death, from his family and his tribe for ever; and yet Jonathan continued to do his duty; he fought bravely against the enemies of his country, purely for his country's sake, not his own.

Methinks he was one of the truest patriots that the world has ever known; a disinherited man, he fought as bravely, as nobly, as though fighting for the establishment of his own throne, and not the throne of another man, for whose advancement he and his were to be set aside. That, my dear boys, was a disinterested unself-

fishness of which too many of us modern Christians, with all our knowledge and all our high privileges, fall far short.

Then observe his perfect obedience to his father. Unaware of Saul's foolishly rash command that during the whole of one day of an engagement against the Philistines no man of his army should eat food on pain of death, Jonathan tasted a little honey; and when his father discovered that he had done so, and declared that he must die, no murmur, no remonstrance from Jonathan is recorded; he stood bravely ready to die, if need were, rather than that his father's oath should be dishonoured; but the people rescued him, saying, "As the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with GOD this day. So the people rescued Jonathan that he died not." With one aspect of Jonathan's character every one is well acquainted—his great love for David. The earliest recorded instance of a close absorbing friendship between two men is that between Jonathan and David; but it is happily not the last. The words of the Bible description of this friendship are very strong and brightly coloured. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Again, "Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David;" and David, speaking of Jonathan after his death,

said, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: Very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

Strong, ardent words these by which to describe a friendship, and you see that the inspired writers of God's Holy Bible, the book that in all its details is of profit to our souls, were not ashamed to write down such; and yet too many of the natives of these British Isles, more especially the Lowland Scots and the higher class of English, are often ashamed (or seem to be ashamed) to use warm, loving language in speaking to and of their friends. Coldness of manner and language is one of the great defects of the national character. We need never be ashamed of honest, worthily placed love and friendship; and indeed, what is ordinarily understood as love, that is, the natural God-given instinct of affection of man for woman, is too often concealed or half denied out of false shame and foolish reserve, and the result of such false and really unnatural shame is too often such as ought indeed to cause genuine shame and heart-felt penitence.

The mutual love of Jonathan and David, who were no idle loungers, no sentimental men of fashion, but brave warriors trained to hardship and endurance, was, as mere love, beautiful and estimable; but, in the case of Jonathan, it was more beautiful than any ordinary friendship.

Remember who David was, and in what relation he stood to the throne of Israel, and then you can realise how beautiful and noble was Jonathan's affection for him. The disinherited eldest son of a king to love the man for whom he was disinherited! Think of that, and then you can see how nobly unselfish, nay, how *selfless*, was Jonathan.

A bad man would have hated David, as Saul, being bad, did hate him, and even a fairly good man might have been excused for disliking him; but Jonathan loved him—loved him for the loveliness and loveliness of his character; he was *so great* as to be above prejudices which would have had strong weight with many even really great-souled, really honourable men. But (and here seems to me to be almost the most valuable part of the whole lesson) dearly and strongly as Jonathan loved David, and keenly as he remonstrated against the unkindness and injustice shown to him by Saul, he never forsook his father for his friend. He tried long and earnestly to reconcile Saul to David, succeeding signally on one occasion, and greatly rejoicing, no doubt, in that success; but when, at last, he found that it was impossible for them to continue to live together, he chose to abide by his father, to do his duty by him, unkind, unpleasing, unjust, and madly ill-tempered though he was.

In his lifetime Jonathan devoted himself to his father and his interests, and he died fighting bravely by that father's side. Deeply and fondly and warmly as he loved David, he yet ever remembered that he had been a son before he was a friend, and that the earlier duty was the more binding of the two.

And why was Jonathan's character and conduct excellent and Saul's evil? Because Jonathan had that which Saul lacked—heart-faith in God and hearty desire to serve Him. He had faith enough to see the hand of God in all the outward events of his life, and love enough to bow uncomplainingly to His will, even though it bore hard against all his own worldly prospects. Knowing that David had been chosen by God to be king instead of himself, instead of hating him forthwith, as some men would have done, as Saul did, he loved him because he was the LORD's chosen and anointed servant. Jonathan, in fact, strove to have no will but God's will; whereas his father, Saul, all his life strove—how vainly his history tells—to make God's will subservient to his will. Jonathan loved and feared and obeyed God under far greater difficulties than his father had ever had; therefore let none of you *dare* to say that the hardness of your lot in life is a hindrance to your serving God.

Some of you may have very hard, trying lives,

but I do not think that any of them can be, at any rate, *more* trying, *more* full of disappointment and grief, than was Jonathan's. I earnestly desire that each of you would think often of the example of the young man Jonathan ; and think of it to imitate it, trying, from love to God, and with the help of God, to be as unselfish, as faithful in every relation of life, as enduring and patient ; above all, as loving-hearted as he was, believing (as he evidently believed) that all the sorrows and disappointments of this earthly life "work together for good," as being means of training souls for the full enjoyment of the heavenly life.



TALK XI.

DAVID.

YOUTHFUL HOPES AND ENTHUSIASM.

PART I.

No member of the Church of GOD under her former dispensation is more beloved by the universal Church under her new and present dispensation and in her later development than is David; and this is so because we know much more of him than of any of his predecessors, not excepting even Joseph, who is almost as popular a character and as dear a friend.

Joseph was less faulty than David, but perhaps not quite so lovable. We have comparatively few recorded *words* of Joseph, whilst we have not only many of David's sayings at different times of his life, but also many of his heart's best thoughts and feelings—thoughts and feelings which were the breathings of the SPIRIT of GOD.

We can form in our own minds a distinct image of the shepherd-boy, the warrior, the poet, the musician, the patriot-king; and under all these varied phases

we see our beloved David, and recognise him as our own intimate acquaintance, with whom we have, as it were, held counsel since our earliest days, since we first learned to lisp at our mother's knee, "The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

You are so familiar with the psalms of David, as the Christian Church has taken care that you shall be, that I think it is probable that your idea of David is taken almost wholly from them, and that after all—dear and familiar friend though he is—you are not intimately acquainted with the details of his life as given to us in the historical books of Samuel, the Kings, and Chronicles; and it is possible that although his inspired sayings are amongst those which guide and regulate your inner spiritual life, you have but seldom thought of taking some of the actions of David as examples for your own conduct, and of looking on others as grave warnings against sins which every Christian is pledged to hate and to avoid. I therefore purpose that in our talk together about David we shall say less respecting his Psalms and more concerning his recorded life, using the former, when we do use them, as illustrations of the latter.

He is first brought before us when he was very young, the youngest of a family of eight sons, and, probably, only eighteen or nineteen years of age. I wish you to make in your own minds a picture

of the scene in which he is introduced to us. You remember that Samuel had been forbidden by God to mourn any longer for Saul, and was directed to go to Bethlehem in order to anoint another man to be the future king over Israel.

Samuel doubted and hesitated a little before promising obedience; he feared the wrath of Saul, and said, "How *can* I go? If Saul hear, he will kill me." God was not angry with this hesitation and natural fear that Samuel felt, *because* His faithful servant put them before Him pleadingly and trustingly, as a child puts a trouble and fear into the heart of his mother.

GOD is not angered at our fears and doubts. He is angered when we confide those fears and doubts only to our fellow-beings, and never to Him who can best relieve them. In this particular case, GOD not only listened patiently to Samuel's honest expression of fear, He provided means whereby that fear might be smoothed away, and by which an added weight and dignity would be given to the act that Samuel was to perform. "And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. And call Jesse to the sacrifice."

I think we may learn from this conversation between GOD and Samuel that God does not disapprove of wise and prudent tactics in dealings between nations

and individuals ; and that He does not require that we should always, and at all times, reveal the whole of any matter when silence would be the more prudent course. We are never to speak falsely, at least, we never *should* so speak, but we are not always bound to tell the whole truth. Assured and comforted by this proof of GOD's care for him, the aged prophet did as he was commanded, and though he grieved over Saul, went to the little hill-cradled town of Bethlehem in order to set apart a man to be king over Israel.

Evidently Jesse was one of the leading elders of the city, and he and his sons were especially bidden to the sacrifice by Samuel, who knew that from that family the future king was to be chosen, but he did not know which amongst the many stalwart men who stood around their father Jesse was *the* chosen one. Thinking perhaps of Saul and his imposing height and fine person, Samuel's fancy was caught by Eliab, the eldest of old Jesse's sons, and he said to himself, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him."

But the LORD said unto Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused *him* ; for the LORD seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." Very solemn words these, from which we can derive

both comfort and warning—comfort in cases where men misjudge and blame us, though we feel within our hearts that we have tried to do our best, that our motive has been the desire of promoting GOD's glory and honour; and warning at those times, when men praise our outward actions whilst our inward hearts tell us that our motives were mean and unworthy of the servants of GOD, or, at best, tell us that we had acted from mere impulse, and not from any real desire to serve and glorify GOD. The seven sons were brought by Jesse their father, one by one, before Samuel, but not one proved to be the choice of GOD. David was the youngest, and absent from home, and even his father never imagined that the LORD might have special need of *him*; but on the bidding of Samuel, he was sent for.

Bethlehem was the centre of a pastoral country. The keeping of flocks, and not the tilling of the ground, was the chief occupation of the men of the district, and so it continued to be down to the time of our LORD's birth. "There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks," on that most wonderful, most eventful night the world has ever yet known—the night when the Redeemer of mankind was born in Bethlehem, the native town of His virgin mother's great ancestor, David, the shepherd-king.

The type and the Antitype born in the same

place! How beautifully do the designs of GOD fit into one another, and in His grand scheme no detail is unimportant, or capable of being dispensed with or set aside. The shepherd-king belonged to Bethlehem of Judah, "the place of the keeping of flocks," and there also was born the GOOD SHEPHERD, who gave His life for the sheep.

David was sent for at the command of Samuel, and I think we can form in our minds a picture of the scene. The sons of Jesse waited for his coming in some impatience, and probably a little scornfulness; even Jesse himself must have been surprised, and not wholly pleased that the feast should be delayed for his youngest born, a mere child when compared with his brothers.

Samuel waited quietly, but doubtless he also marvelled what manner of youth this shepherd boy could be for whom his handsome, noble-looking elder brothers were to be set aside. GOD's own choice! Samuel longed to see him enter, and presently into that waiting company the young man came and looked around him, more astonished probably than they who waited for him, for he saw not only all his own family gathered together, but also the elders of the city, and an aged and venerable prophet.

All eyes were turned upon the boy, Samuel's the most keenly and eagerly of all, and what did he

see? No tall and stately man, only a youth, a stripling, but withal "one of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look to," with bright, rosy cheeks and fair, red-gold hair, what, in the homely tongue of our own Scottish country, we should call "a bonnie laddie."

Samuel had no time to wonder at the difference between this pretty boy and the former choice, the stately, majestic man of over forty years of age; for the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he!"

We wish that we could know something of David's feelings when he was suddenly, and without any apparent preparation, anointed in the midst of his brethren by the prophet of God. One thing we may be sure of, that his whole previous life, short though it was, had been one preparation for that hour—unconscious preparation on his part, but guided and directed by God, Who knew that at an appointed time He would "call him from the sheepfolds, and from following the ewes great with young." By patient, obedient doing of his earthly father's will, by conscientious loving fulfilment of his lowly duties, had the young David daily been trained for his high destiny, his terrible responsibility.

But there was something more—something that lay behind and below all his obedience and his dutiful

diligence, and that something was the very quality that poor Saul had always lacked, the best quality a man can have, and without which no act, however seemingly good, is really of any worth—love of God, filial confiding love mingling with holy fear. It was the possession of that quality that made David “the man after God’s own heart,” and that kept him, in spite of many falls and shortcomings, steadfast to the end, and that caused him to sing triumphantly,

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me.”

Saul’s nature was ardent and impulsive, but all the ardour and all the impulses were for himself. David was eager, ardent, impetuous, but it was his love that was eager and zealous; he was full of love both to God and man. He was a great talker, but the greater part of his confidences was given to his God; he held close, intimate, loving communion with God as a Friend and Father, as well as a King and Ruler.

It is not clearly to be understood from the Scripture record whether either David or his family had at first a full comprehension of God’s purpose towards him in causing him to be anointed by Samuel. If

they had, the secret was long and carefully preserved by them, and both the young king and his family were content to wait quietly and unobtrusively for farther revelations from God.

David went back to his sheepfolds, and for a time there was so little change in his outward condition that the scene of the anointing might almost have been a dream. But an unexpected occasion introduced the peaceful young shepherd into the court of the reigning monarch. Saul having, by his own persistent rejection of God, been rejected by God and left to himself—that worst and most miserable of all conditions to which the human heart can be liable—indulged his evil tempers so unrestrainedly that he brought on the terrible woe of insanity. He worked himself up into rages and passionate anger, that seemed to those about him to be the evil “trouble” or disease of madness, with which God suffers some of His people to be afflicted, and those are not always wicked people, but, on the contrary, good and holy men and women, who for some mysterious, and yet, it must be, loving reason, are thus sorely tried.

Saul had brought his madness upon himself, though his attendants did not probably perceive that such was the case; and as there was something wonderfully lovable about this poor Saul, they were grieved

for him, and bethought themselves of a remedy, and one more humane and reasonable in its character than most of those which were used in far more enlightened ages of the world's history, and even in the last century.

They thought that music, such, perhaps, as was used in the schools of the prophets, might soothe and restore him; and David was recommended by one of the servants in these very strongly approving words: "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him."

These words prove to us that however lowly and apparently hidden a life any person may lead, if he really have power and talent within him, that power and talent will at some time be brought to light.

David was a sweet singer, a poet, and musician, in one, and the combination is exceedingly rare. Very few of the world's poets have ever been able to set their own poems to music, and perhaps still fewer great musicians have composed poetry for their beautiful melodies. David sang his own most lovely psalms to some wild chants such as were once well known amongst the Celts of the Scottish High-

lands, and are still common amongst the Celts of Wales.

In a later talk we shall speak of the Psalms themselves, meanwhile we shall think only of the effect of some of them upon Saul. "Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." But although Saul loved David and made him his armour-bearer, he seems, after a while, to have slipped out of the king's notice, and to have been sent back a second time to his sheep. Though shortly after there was war with the Philistines, and his three eldest brethren were in the army, and though he was known to some friends as a "mighty, valiant man," he contentedly stayed at home, keeping his sheep, and singing his sweet songs, making no effort to rise out of obscurity or to hasten God's time, until at the command of his father he went down to the camp of Israel to take a present to his brethren.

From that day his life was changed; he was never again in obscurity. God had other and more trying work for him to do than the keeping of sheep on the hills of Bethlehem; and at the end of this first phase of his history we will end our first talk about David, who, like Joseph, is peculiarly a young man's saint, a young man's pattern. Whilst you are young strive to be obedient,

humble, patient, as David was. To use his own words:—

*“Tarry thou the LORD’s leisure, and He shall
comfort thine heart. Commit thy way
unto the LORD: trust also in Him, and
He shall bring it to pass.”*

TALK XII.

DAVID.

THE WARFARE OF MIDDLE AGE.

PART II.

AFTER having been for a short time a resident in the court of Saul, the young David returned to his sheepfolds. War was again going on between the Israelites and the Philistines, and the king, recovering for a time from his madness, had no need of David's services as poet and musician, and, as subsequent events prove, he even forgot him altogether. The long, harassing war, or rather the succession of skirmishes, seemed to have reached a culminating point.

The two armies were encamped within sight of each other, and were ready to do battle, but the battle was delayed by the unusual terms imposed by the Philistines. They demanded that the difference between the nations should be decided by single combat between the man of their choice, to represent their side, and a man chosen by the Israelites to represent their side, stipulating, that if the representative Israelite

conquered, all Philistia should be subject unto Saul; and that should the representative Philistine prove the victor, all Israel should thenceforth and for ever be slaves unto the Philistines. Very terrible were the terms, and such as could not be complied with, for there was no man to match with the representative Philistine in the camp of Israel; nay, in all the land.

Saul the king was taller by the head and shoulders than any of his subjects, and yet he was as a dwarf compared with this great Goliath; for even counting the cubits of his stature at the lowest standard—there having been three standards—and taking also the number of his cubits as given in the Septuagint rather than as in our Authorised Version, his height must have been 7 feet $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches. According to the Authorised Version he was 11 feet $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches high.

For forty days the Philistines sent out their giant champion, morning and evening, to proclaim aloud the terms which they demanded, and to taunt the Israelites with their inability to comply with those terms. A miserable period must those forty days have been, more bitterly mortifying and humiliating than the strictest and most penitential Lent of modern Christians.

Saul, once brave and powerful, had not now the courage to defy the giant, and dared not offer himself

to do battle as the representative Israelite, because he could no longer claim the help and protection of GOD ; and the Israelitish people were in this sore strait, when, at last, there appeared the representative man, "one chosen out of the people," a wonderful type of Him who "was made like unto His brethren,"—the one representative MAN for the whole world, the Champion for GOD and man in the fight against Lucifer,—the representative Goliath for the hosts of devildom. For forty days Goliath had tempted and insulted the Israelites, and at the end thereof was vanquished by the youthful David.

For forty days the second and better David fasted in the wilderness, "being tempted of the devil," and at the last, he overcame and vanquished him. David, in slaying the Philistine, aimed at his head ; and thus also did his great Descendant according to the flesh, when, in offering up His life on the cross, He "bruised the serpent's head."

Apart from these grand and all-important typical meanings of David's combat with Goliath, there are many instructive lessons to be learnt from his conduct. He did not thrust himself into the battle, but although he was probably anxious to be with his countrymen in their time of danger, he remained at home keeping his father's sheep in all humility and patience, until commanded by that father to go down to the camp of Israel

and inquire for the welfare of his elder brothers, who were there with the king. Whilst he was in the act of saluting them, the Philistine champion came forth, and proclaimed aloud his insulting taunts. David's youthful zeal and patriotism were instantly awakened, and also a better feeling than even those—his jealousy for the honour of the living God.

The Israelites of old were particularly privileged because of their sure knowledge that the cause of their country was without doubt the cause of God. David asked eagerly of the men around him *why* they allowed the uncircumcised Philistine to reproach Israel and defy God. Hearing his questions, his elder brother Eliab spoke to him with unkindness and haughty assumption of superiority. David answered him with quiet dignity, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?"

When David's eager words had been rehearsed to the king, and the young man was brought into the royal presence, there was a most happy mixture of confidence and humility in his talk and manner. There was the ring of exceeding eagerness in the opening sentence, "Let no man's heart fail because of him: thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul, whose own stature exceeded six feet, and who yet deemed himself a pigmy in comparison with the great Goliath, looked at the young, slight, pretty

boy, and said, not unkindly, but with much gentleness, for the eager words were still ringing in his ears, and the eager face was before him, "Thou art not able to go out against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou *art but a youth*, and he a man of war from his youth." These words of the king taught the boy that he must bring forward some practical illustration of his capabilities, and so, restraining his eagerness, and, as it were, gathering his thoughts together, he replied, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went after him. . . . Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living GOD."

We can imagine that after this statement there was a pause; the king still felt uncertain, and, with some of his old-time kindness and humanity, hesitated to allow this young, bright life to be quenched, and to send this eager-tongued, brave lad to become an easy prey to the Philistine giant.

David seeing this hesitation, spoke again with deliberation and power: "The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." The calm confidence of these words decided Saul; the old faith that he had done

his utmost to stifle and quench, revived for a moment within him, and he said with kingly authority, as a king should speak, "Go, and the LORD be with thee."

In all kindness Saul offered David the use of his armour; but David found that he could not properly manage weapons to which he was unaccustomed, therefore he set forth on his dangerous mission with only the ordinary accompaniments to the life of an Israelitish shepherd—the staff, the sling, and the smooth stones.

In David's refusal of Saul's armour and his choice of the shepherd's weapons many ancient and modern Fathers of the Church have seen deep spiritual meanings, some of which I should like to bring to your notice.

"It was ordered that the carnal weapons of this world should be *offered* to David, and that they should be refused by him, in order that it might be seen from this refusal, and from the simplicity of the means used, that the victory was of the LORD. At the time of our LORD's first coming, and, indeed, throughout their whole history, the Jews, like Saul, relied upon the weapons of this world; but JESUS CHRIST, the true David, in His conflict with the spiritual Goliath, and in the preaching of His Gospel, did not resort to the armour of this world's wisdom, or power, or

wealth, but chose the condition and circumstances which are despised of men, and overcame Satan by the Word of GOD, and by the ministry of things and persons deemed little and insignificant by men, such as water, bread, and wine, for the outward signs of His most holy Sacraments ; and fishermen and publicans for the stewards and ministers of those mysterious Sacraments ; above all, by the Cross, the tree accursed and despised alike by Jew and Gentile. Young David took the shepherd's crook in his hand ; the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls goes forth before us, and comes seeking us when we stray and wander from His fold."

St. Augustine says, "When our Divine David, the Good Shepherd of Bethlehem, went forth at the temptation to meet Satan, our spiritual Goliath, he took the five books of Moses out of the flowing stream of Judaism ; He took what was solid out of what was fluid ; He took what was permanent out of what was transitory ; He took what was moral, and therefore perpetual, out of what was ceremonial and temporary. He took stones out of a brook, and with one of these He overthrew Satan. All CHRIST's answers to the tempter are *moral* precepts, taken from *one* book of the law, namely, Deuteronomy ; and He prefaced His replies with the same words, 'It is written ;' and with this sling and stone of Scripture He laid our Goliath low, and He has

taught us by His example how we also may vanquish the tempter."

These typical meanings of the combat with Goliath are indeed interesting; but in the interest in them I hope that you will not overlook the practical lessons for your everyday life to be gained from the conduct of the young David, and that in all your difficulties, trials, and temptations you will try to imitate his humility, his zeal and eager fervour, and, especially, his holy confidence in God as a strong and all-sufficient Protector and Guide.

With the important incident of the victory over Goliath a chapter in David's life was closed; with that event ended his lowly, unknown, and probably happy youth. The days of his peaceful shepherd-ing were over for ever, and the busy life of the courtier-warrior was begun.

We cannot but recollect that with the temptation in the wilderness the unknown, retired, youthful life of the spiritual David was brought to a close, and His active ministry was therewith begun. "Saul took David that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house." All manner of new events occurred to the young shepherd, but the one which probably made the deepest impression upon his character was the friendship with the king's eldest son, the man who would have succeeded his father in the kingly dignity but for that father's sin.

In the realms of poetry and history there are few things more beautiful, and more full of deep, touching interest than this true tale of the friendship, the pure, unselfish, disinterested friendship, between Jonathan and David—a friendship which ere long exacted much from Jonathan; for wisely though David behaved himself, the wicked jealousy and angry rage of Saul was soon directed against him, and the *happiness* of the young men in their beautiful friendship was marred by the cruelty of Saul, though the friendship itself was all the more firmly cemented thereby. Never was the proverb, "Prosperity makes friends; adversity tries them," more applicable than in the case of these young men. David's brilliant exploit and his victory over Goliath won Jonathan's high, courageous soul; his after trials and sorrows but made him dearer to his tender, faithful heart.

Jonathan chose David as his friend in David's sunshine hour of triumph: he continued to love him as his friend through all his humiliation and distress; and with unselfishness more wonderful than any other on record, he thus loved and cherished one whom he knew was destined to take the kingly power from the house of Saul, and to become the founder of another royal dynasty.

The conduct of these young men in their intercourse together should not only be admired, but

also imitated by you. Observe that although they both suffered bitterly from the wicked cruelty of Saul, no word of abuse or violent, unkindly language concerning him is recorded as having passed between them. Again, there was no silly concealment of their great affection; they were not ashamed of loving one another; and although Jonathan knew well the terrible force of his father's evil temper, he yet spoke boldly and manfully to him concerning David, speaking of his excellence of character with the eager warmth of friendship.

Notice also the faithfulness of each to his spoken word. When David went up to Bethlehem, leaving Jonathan to plead his cause with Saul, he might and could have remained there, in at least comparative safety, in his father's house; but he had promised Jonathan to return at a certain time, and he kept his word. No man, or woman either, can be said to be a worthy person who is not jealous for the honour of his or her word; who does not regard a promise, whether about a great or a little matter, as a sacred pledge, *not to be broken*. If it prove impossible to keep it in the letter (by the occurrence of circumstances quite unforeseen when it was made), it can always be kept in spirit, so long as it is not in itself contrary to the law of GOD; and every effort, almost to death, aye, often *even to death*, should

be made to keep it in the very letter, as in the spirit. David remembering, doubtless, his own and Jonathan's faithfulness to their promises one to the other, and taught by the SPIRIT of GOD, wrote in one of his psalms :—

“LORD, *who shall dwell in Thy Tabernacle, or rest upon Thy holy hill? even he that speaketh the truth from his heart: he that hath used no deceit in his tongue: he that sweareth unto his neighbour, and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance.*”

If you do use deceit in your tongue, and if you do lightly and easily break your promises, simply because it is not *convenient* to keep them, you will be at the end of this earthly life unfit to dwell hereafter in the Tabernacle of the LORD or to rest upon His holy hill. Begin, if you have not already done so, to train your souls to faithfulness in great matters by faithfulness in what seem like small matters; only *seem*, for nothing that happens to a man is really small, because everything affects his character either for good or for evil.

Jonathan seeing that David faithfully kept his word in smaller things, asked of him a great promise, saying, “Thou shalt not only, while yet I live, show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not; but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my

house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth."

Jonathan knew that David was to be king over Israel, and he knew that his cause was a rightful one, yet he let him depart from the court alone. Jonathan, apart from his love for his friend, would, in a certain sense of the word, have enjoyed the life of adventure and enterprise upon which David was now to embark, but, nevertheless, he remained steadfast to his duty as a son. He continued with his father, unworthy and unkind though that father was. How unlike this conduct of Jonathan is that of many young people, who lightly forsake their parents' house because they find its restraints and restrictions irksome, and who at a very early age selfishly set up a home for themselves and choose the cares and responsibilities of marriage without waiting to give the "old folk" some return for all they did for them in the days of their youth! David's wanderings and adventures are full of interest to all who will allow themselves to be interested therein, and in some of their characteristics have been frequently repeated in history, in the early life of our own Robert the Bruce and other well-known men.

David and Robert Bruce may be said to have benefited by their trials and hazardous escapes;

they but made them more manly, more courageous, and more self-denying. A man can allow his circumstances to make or mar him according to the way in which he uses them and the spirit in which he views them.

The wandering, homeless, adventurous life, hunted up and down upon the mountains, finding shelter in dens and caves of the earth, improved and strengthened David and our own Scottish Robert; but alas! the very same sort of life injured and depraved the character of Charles Edward Stuart; and this, because the former men accepted it as training from the Hand of God, and whilst patiently submitting to all therein that was inevitable, bravely rose superior above all which it was in their power to subdue, whereas the latter murmured at it, as the adverse doing of man only, and sank helplessly under the physical temptations which the life presented, allowing the cold and the weariness to create a craving for the false, temporary support of intoxicating liquor, that at last formed itself into a settled habit of drunkenness, that crippled all his mental and bodily powers, and degraded his once manly and right royal nature.

Some errors undoubtedly blemish David's wandering life, and these are not concealed from us in the sacred record. On first flying from the court and taking refuge with the high priest, he did not keep

the precept that he afterwards so strongly enforced, but did, alas! "use deceit in his tongue;" and from his falsity can easily be traced the terrible slaughter commanded by the wicked Saul to be executed upon the priests of the LORD and their wives and children.

There are also incidents of that time highly creditable to David. Although he knew that he was to be king, he did not attempt to assert his power or to depose Saul. He gathered followers together, but only for his own protection and defence. He was always loyal to Saul. Often when Saul was hunting him like a wild beast upon the mountains, Saul's own life was almost given as a prey into his hand, and yet he would never take it. On the contrary, he saved and protected him, as "the LORD's anointed," from all danger. With our next reading we shall take up the last period into which David's life may be divided, and trace his history after the death of Saul set him at liberty to declare his own kingship.

TALK XIII.

DAVID.

SIN—REPENTANCE—PARDON.

PART III.

DURING the years of David's wandering life, it could not but be that he should have many romantic adventures and hair-breadth escapes, in some of which his conduct shines forth as a bright example; in others, with the lurid light of a solemn and sorrowful warning. Of the former character is the tale concerning the water of the well of Bethlehem. David longed, and said, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is at the gate!" Three of his mighty men, as they are called in the Bible—or, as we should say, the chief officers of his camp—hearing their beloved captain and leader express this wish, did as brave men have always done, and will always do—disregarded all the peril of the undertaking, and resolved either to gratify his desire or to perish in the endeavour to do so.

"The three brake through the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Ephraim, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the

gate, and took and brought it to David." The young chieftain gazed at the vessel full of water and at the men who had brought it with amazement and horror. To return to the simple Bible record, we are told—"David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD, and said, My God, forbid it me that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy, for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it? Therefore he would not drink it."

History, as I have before observed to you, often repeats itself, and instances of self-denial similar to this of David can be found in the conduct of the warrior King Alexander when in the deserts of Gedrosia, and of Sir Philip Sydney when dying on the field of Zutphen.

Alexander was returning from the banks of the Indus, and though not long recovered from a severe wound, he determined to explore the region then called Gedrosia, a desolate, treeless district, where Semiramis and Cyrus before him had each lost an army through hunger and thirst. Great were the sufferings and privations of these Greeks, but Alexander stimulated their weary march by his own courage and unfaltering endurance, taking his full share with the common soldiers in every privation and hardship; and once, when, like all his comrades, he was faint with heat and thirst,

a small quantity of water, procured with much fatigue and difficulty, was brought to him in a helmet, he refused to drink it, saying that it was too precious for his own use alone, and that as the whole army could not partake of it, he would pour it out as a libation to the gods.

In this act of David and Alexander there was little, if any, trace of the selfishness that unfortunately self-denial sometimes is. This may sound a curious if not a paradoxical statement; but we know that seeming paradoxes are often the truest of all utterances, and a little thought will show us that, owing to the infirmity of human nature, it is possible that frequently an act so noble, judged by itself, as self-denial, cannot be performed without involving a disregard of the feelings of some other person.

To make my meaning a little clearer and to come down to daily life, let us suppose one of you to be ill, and wishing very much for some fruit out of season, except in rich men's forcing-houses, or in those of persons who make the rearing and selling of costly fruits their worldly business. Your mother, or sister, or some other friend determines to try to gratify your desire, and, either by requesting a favour—never a pleasant thing to do—or by the sacrifice of more money than can, perhaps, be well afforded, obtains the coveted fruit, and with much delight brings it to you. Thereupon, you,

with unhealthy morbidity, decide to deny yourself, and refuse to eat the dainty which it cost the friend trouble to procure—a trouble held as nothing in the joy of the giving.

Again, you may wish greatly to be present at some innocent amusement, and be unable to do so because of the expense of the entrance-money. A friend, aware of your wish, denies himself the pleasure of going, and gives you a ticket, having great gladness in the giving. You at once assume the high, heroic strain, and refuse to go. Such acts on your part would indeed be acts of self-denial; but I cannot think that it would be holy self-denial, such as the LORD loveth when He saith, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."

In the heathen Alexander there was a spirit of religiousness, of devotion to an unseen and higher power, even though he did not know who the True and One only Highest Power was; and alike in him, and in the better instructed David (the servant of the living God), there was the real unselfishness that did not use self-denial for self-denial's sake only. David poured out the dearly bought water unto the LORD, the great GOD of heaven and earth, as being too precious and too holy to belong to any one lower than Himself, and in thus making it an act of religious sacrifice, the self-denial became a great and a holy act.

Alexander had a secondary motive, that of policy : he feared that his army might become discontented if they saw him enjoying a privilege which they could not procure ; but David's act was one thoroughly in accordance with the religious training and feeling of the Israelitish people, and was so perfectly understood by " the mighty men," that they could not feel mortified, or imagine that their costly gift, bought at the peril of their own lives, was lightly regarded or valued below its worth.

Great as was Alexander's self-denial, David's was greater, as having less of human policy involved in its motive ; but that of Sir Philip Sydney was greatest of all, for in it there was no shadow of selfishness. He was mortally wounded and parched with thirst, but he gave the water which would have so greatly refreshed him, and soothed his dying agony, to a fellow-being more severely wounded, but not, like himself, unto death, because it might help to restore that sufferer to life to which no means could restore its giver.

To return again to the practical lesson, it might well be that if you were sick and ill, and saw brought to you by the hand of affection some desired and refreshing dainty, a call within your soul should sound to some higher and nobler deed than the lawful gratification of self.

To many a man and many a woman there comes

such a call. The vocation of self-sacrifice is the vocation of some, and must not be unheeded, for "it is of the LORD." If, with the full consent of the friend who wished to gratify you, that pleasant dainty should be sent to some one more ill and much poorer than yourself, some one with none of your comforts; or, if the ticket to the pleasant amusement were handed over to one who has hardly any pleasures or amusements, and is likely seldom to have any; such acts would be unselfish self-denial, and would be as surely an offering unto the LORD as was the water of the well of Bethlehem poured out before Him by David; and, therefore, let us learn from David, and from many another of the saints of GOD, to resist no calls to holy sacrifice, to denial of self; not alone for the sake of exercising the virtue, for without a motive it is, as it were, no virtue; but as a means of showing our love to the LORD by showing it to His brethren, for whose sake He Himself, "though He was rich, became poor."

Another bright example for us modern Christians is shown to us in David's loyalty to Saul. Saul was persecuting him unjustly, and through his cruelties David's aged parents, as well as he himself, had to live in exile.

Read for yourselves the tale of David's wanderings and hair-breadth escapes, and see how unrelentingly cruel Saul was to him; and see also, what

is a more important lesson, that David never rebelled against him, never raised war against him; nay, more than that, with a magnanimity almost unparalleled in all history, he twice saved his life when to have killed him would have been the easy work of a moment. On the first of these occasions, when Saul and 3000 picked men were pursuing David and his little band of faithful followers, it happened that Saul went alone into a cave in the recesses of which David and some of his men were hidden. These men not unnaturally said to their young leader, "Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do unto him as seemest good unto thee."

Try to picture the scene to yourselves. Saul, coming in from the light of day into the gloom of the cave, could not see David and his men, and seemed not to have heard the stealthy whispers urging the taking of his life. Thus urged, David did creep behind the king, and cut off a portion of his robe or mantle; but his heart smote him for even this insult to the anointed of God.

Following Saul out of the cave, he cried after him, saying, "My lord the king! And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed himself. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying,

Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave; and some bade me kill thee; but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed. Moreover, my father, see; yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand; for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand; and I have not sinned against thee, yet thou huntest my soul to take it." *

The old warm-hearted impulses of affection broke once more through the barriers of jealous hatred which wicked Saul had built up deliberately in his own soul, and with tears he confessed David's magnanimity and his own injustice; but the poor self-made alien from GOD soon forgot David's kindness, and once again led his 3000 men under Abner in pursuit of him. Again Saul fell into the hands of David, and was again magnanimously spared.

David and his nephew Abishai went down to the camp of Saul by night, and found the king asleep in the midst of his sleeping guards, with the spear,—too well known to David as having twice been hurled at his inoffensive person,—stuck in the ground at his bolster. Abishai begged David

* 1 Sam. xxiv.

to use this spear and forthwith kill the king; but David replied, "Destroy him not; for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? And David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed; but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster and the cruse of water, and let us go." * The above is the exact Bible record, but for brevity's sake I will finish the tale in my own words. David and Abishai hurried away to a hill at a safe distance, and then David shouted out to the sleepers in the camp, and especially taunted Abner for the little care with which so valiant a man had guarded the king's life.

Saul knew David's voice, and the former scene of manly remonstrance on the one hand, and of childish confession and unavailing remorse, not real repentance, on the other, was repeated, with the important variation that Saul begged David to go back to him. But when David would trust his life only to GOD, and not to him, he parted from him with words of blessing; and David actually sent back the king's spear, asking for one of Saul's young men to come to fetch it.

* 1 Sam. xxvi.

From this wondrous loyalty and personal forgivingness of David we can surely learn our duty of unswerving loyalty to our good and worthy sovereign. If she were as bad and unworthy even as Saul, it would still be our duty to serve her faithfully, and to honour her office and position as "the LORD's anointed." But happily, with a sovereign such as ours, loyalty in thought, word, and deed is a pleasure, as well as a bounden duty.

We learn also from David's conduct not to take revenge upon our enemies, especially if they be defenceless and in our power, but to leave their punishment to GOD.

From David's conduct with regard to Nabal we can also learn some useful lessons. Nabal—a churl and a fool by name, and by nature—had shown ungrateful inhospitality to the young chieftain, and had even insulted him grossly. David vowed the death of Nabal and all his household, but was turned from his purpose by the prudent and generous conduct of Abigail, and not only refrained from taking his just revenge upon Nabal, but thanked and blessed Abigail for keeping him from shedding blood.

It now behoves us to turn from the contemplation of David's virtues during the time of his wanderings, to thoughts about the great mistake and sin that he committed in seeking shelter among the Philistines.

His confidence in GOD failed him, and one who had been long full of holy, childlike faith allowed the sin of distrust to take possession for a time of his once free and happy heart, and to cause him to commit the further sin of casting in his lot with the enemies of his GOD and of his own countrymen.

It is a sorrowful, though by no means a solitary instance, of men failing in the very gifts in which they are pre-eminent. Moses, the meekest of men, broke forth once into unadvised and angry speech; and faithful Abraham, who could offer up his one son in obedience to the command of GOD, twice distrusted GOD's care of him, or rather of his wife Sarah; and so David, the loving, leal-hearted, trustful David, who had said with holy confidence, "The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine,"—this very David actually threw himself upon the protection of the Philistines, so tired and worn was he with wandering up and down the face of the earth.

Such a lapse from faith should teach us to be very doubtful of ourselves, and ever to say with St. Paul,—

"Not as though I had already apprehended, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of CHRIST

JESUS; . . . *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in JESUS CHRIST.*"

David was punished in various ways for his want of faith and patient endurance, and yet GOD was far better to him than he deserved; for when he came into the dreadful dilemma (which he might well have foreseen would arise had he taken time to think) of being commanded by Achish, king of Gath, his chosen protector, to fight with the Philistines against Israel, GOD moved the hearts of the lords and princes of Philistia to insist upon his not going forth with their army.

We cannot doubt that, all unconsciously to themselves, GOD did thus move their hearts so that His erring servant David might be saved from one of two sins into which he must otherwise have fallen—either that of slaying his very own countrymen, his brethren according to the flesh, or that of pretending to go down on the side of Philistia whilst purposing to go over to the hosts of Israel at the first opportunity.

But at last the end came; Saul and his son Jonathan were slain in the very battle from joining in which David had been spared by the great mercy of GOD; that is to say, Jonathan and his two brothers were slain, and Saul himself mortally wounded. Disabled from flight, he begged his armour-bearer to

draw his sword and slay him; and on his refusal to touch the LORD's anointed, he fell upon his own sword and died,—an example immediately followed by the armour-bearer.

The news was brought to David at Ziklag, the city which Achish had given to him to dwell in, and we know how he fasted and wept with sincere grief for Jonathan, and indeed also for Saul, for whom he had never wholly lost the loyal affection so little deserved by that bad man. At eventide he took his harp, and poured forth that finest of all dirges, the lament over Saul and Jonathan, which, poetically beautiful as it is throughout, culminates in the unequalled pathos of the impassioned words,

*"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan :
very pleasant hast thou been unto me : thy
love to me has been wonderful, passing the
love of women."*

David, at the command of GOD, removed with his band and all his family from Ziklag to Hebron, the ancient, sacred city of the tribe of Judah. Here the men of Judah came to him, and anointed him king over their tribe. He was now thirty years old, and he reigned in Hebron seven and a half years; whilst in Israel, Abner had proclaimed Ishbosheth the eldest surviving son of Saul as king over Gilead, the Ashurites, the valley of Jezreel, Ephraim, and Benjamin, and nominally over all Israel.

Not content with that territory for his puppet king, Abner tried to take Judah also, and a civil war ensued, which ended in David being entirely conqueror, and in the deaths of Abner and Ishbosheth; whereupon all Israel accepted David, and for the third time he was anointed king, now over the whole country. His army soon exceeded 900,000; and resolving to remove the seat of his government nearer to the centre of the country, his choice fell upon Jerusalem, the stronghold of the Jebusites, situated on rocky hills 2600 feet above the level of the sea.

The Jebusites thinking their fortress impregnable, manned the battlements with "lame and blind." The spirit of the eager, impetuous, young David was roused to anger by this insult, and he proclaimed that that man who should first scale the rocky side of the city and kill a Jebusite should be made chief captain of the host. Joab's superior strength and agility gained him the day, and the citadel of Zion, the hill of the Lord, was taken B.C. 1046, and there David reigned for thirty-three years.

These readings are not intended as lessons in Bible history, but as meditations on the conduct of certain characters, and the hints to be derived therefrom for our own conduct in this busy nineteenth century life of ours; and if we seem to linger somewhat long over the life of David, it is because there is scarcely a man in the Holy Bible from whom you young

men may gather more valuable hints, either of warning or of example, for the regulation of your own daily lives than from that of David.

To be sure, you are not kings nor warriors ; but David, though he was a king and a warrior, was a great deal more ; he was a man of genius, a poet and a musician, and withal he was pre-eminently human, having the vices and virtues common to humanity, to ordinary men, but having also, besides these, the motive-power of a GOD-fearing man, of a man pledged to the service of the Great King. In that high service, though, like you, his failures were many, his successes also were many, as yours may be, if you seek the strength that he sought. If after every failure you do as he says that he did, get you to your "LORD right humbly," and with Him confess your sin, "for it was great," most assuredly you will with David be able to say, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sins : Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD GOD of truth." "Thou shalt increase my greatness and comfort me on every side."

David was enthusiastic in his religion ; he was not, as too many modern men are, enthusiastic about all secular matters and coldly indifferent about religious matters. It was with regard to the service of his GOD and in love of his children and friends that the fervent warmth of his nature chiefly manifested itself.

As soon as he had taken Jerusalem, he was determined that it should become the city of God, the place of the Tabernacle of the Most High ; therefore, he set about the removal thither of the Ark of God, the visible symbol of God's presence, which since its restoration by the Philistines had had its stated abode at Kirjath-jearim, under the care of Abinadab and his family.

The king set forth with 30,000 men, the flower of his army, to bring the holy and precious thing to his capital, his hill-crowned, hill-cradled city ; but on the progress thither a terrible and melancholy interruption occurred. As the procession neared the threshing-floor of Nachon, the oxen stumbled and shook the cart, whereupon Uzzah, who was driving, or rather probably leading the oxen, laid his hand upon the Ark to steady it, forgetting the express command that the Ark should not be touched by human hands, not even those of the Levites ; and forgetting also, that the LORD Jehovah did not need his aid. The profanation was punished by Uzzah's instant death,—one of the comparatively few but most signal instances of GOD's stern judgment of sacrilege and irreverence, and of His swiftness to assert and avenge His own honour.

David was deeply grieved and shocked ; but he did not blame Uzzah merely ; he blamed also himself, because he had not remembered that the only auth-

orised mode of transporting the Ark was upon the shoulders of the Levites; and when, three months later, the interrupted progress was resumed, the king made open confession of the mistake, saying, "The LORD our GOD made a breach upon us, because we sought Him not after the due order." *

On this renewal of the solemn march all was done in "due order;" for chastisement having done the purifying work for which GOD's chastisements are ever designed, there was no more disobedience.

The priests and Levites, instead of the warriors, were put prominently forward; and after David had reminded the sons of Levi to sanctify themselves, "they bare the Ark of GOD upon their shoulders, with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of God." † They were escorted by David and all the chosen leaders of Israel. The first movement was watched with great anxiety; but, when the Levites had taken six steps in safety, it was seen that GOD helped them, and the procession halted, whilst David offered as sacrifice seven bullocks and seven rams.

* Now for the first time David was privileged to use his beautiful gifts of poetry and music in the direct service of the sanctuary. He made a complete arrangement of the music of the day, placing it under the direction of the priests Zadok

* 1 Chron. xv. 13.

† 1 Chron. xv. 15.

and Abiathar, and appointing the Levites for its performance, with Asaph at their head. The first of the psalms sung was that which we know as the 132d, wherein are the verses, "We will go into His Tabernacle, we will worship at His footstool : Arise, O LORD, into Thy rest, Thou and the Ark of Thy strength."

As the Ark was borne into the city of Zion, there burst forth that which was almost the grandest effort of David's sublime genius, the heart-stirring refrain that to this very day hardly the most careless ear hears unmoved—

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is this King of Glory ?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle."

How ecstatic must have been the joy of David's heart when his beautiful talents thus received their first open and manifest consecration, when his own poems and his own music were sung by the LORD's consecrated priests in this grand and solemnly impressive ceremony ; when the Ark of God was brought into the city of David, making it thenceforth, and for ever, the Mount Zion of the living GOD ! Thanks be to GOD, his joy has been felt in kind,—though in varying degree,—not only by Handel, and Mendelsohn, by Milton and Shakspear,

and other great and well-renowned Christian musicians and poets; but also by the humblest and most diffident of Sunday-school teachers; by the lowliest author of simple tales written with a holy purpose; by the most obscure of village-church organists, and by the youngest choir-boy who has sung to the honour and glory of GOD, because all these have also received the consecration of the LORD in dedicating their gifts to the service of His sanctuary.

In his religious rejoicing David did not forget secular pleasures. Well indeed would it be that they should ever go together, that is, that the latter should never be unaccompanied by the spirit of the former. The generous king gave to each of the multitude, to women, as well as to men, a loaf of bread, a large piece of meat, and a flagon of wine. Then David returned to bless his household; but here, alas! in his own home came a cloud over the ending of the happy day, the most truly joyful of his whole reign.

His enthusiastic dance before the Ark of the LORD had been observed with scorn by his wife Michal, and she received him with insulting reproaches, which must have been peculiarly painful to David, not only in themselves, coming like a shock of cold water upon his burning enthusiasm; but, as proceeding from the wife of his extreme youth, the sister of his dearest friend, the woman who, contrary to the

usual custom of women, had loved him before he loved her.

Her unkindness was displeasing to the LORD, and He punished her with the hardest of all punishments to a Hebrew woman, that of having no child. From this incident we may all learn how wrong it is to check holy enthusiasm in others by our own coldness and indifference, and how displeasing it is to GOD that those who are of cold, phlegmatic natures should speak hardly and unsympathisingly to people whom they choose to think over-zealous in their religious observances and their wide-hearted benevolence.

Sad indeed is it to have to turn from the contemplation of David in the hour of his holy triumph to thoughts about the greatest sin of his life—that deeply humiliating fall in which he becomes a solemn warning instead of an example, as, with the two exceptions of his falsehood to Ahimelech and his mistrust of GOD in seeking shelter amongst the Philistines, he has hitherto been.

It seems to me that this is one of the very saddest of the many sad Bible stories. The fall of any good man is a painful thing to hear of, but the fall of such a pre-eminently good man as this David—a “man after GOD’s own heart”—is doubly, trebly painful. And yet, apart from our sorrowful horror of all and every sin, there is no member of the Christian Church who would be without this painful *record*; for if we

be therein told of terrible crimes, we learn the secret of a wondrous and beautiful repentance, and we cannot but love David the more tenderly because he has given us words wherewith to betake ourselves to our GOD after our every fall, because he has taught us to say,

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin; for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Create in me a clean heart, O GOD, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me."

David's most grievous twofold sin of adultery and murder had its origin in the comparatively small sin of indolence. We learn of it in these words: "And it came to pass, at the return of the year, at the time when kings *go forth* to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; but David tarried still at Jerusalem."

Instead, then, of going forth to lead his troops to battle, as was the duty of a warrior-king, he loitered in his pleasant capital. Idleness is the fertile mother of mischief. It first caused sleeplessness in the king, and then sin followed sin. Of the first crime, or rather, it is to be feared, of its visible consequence, the king was ashamed, but not with godly shame and sorrow; for instead of confessing it, he used mean, unmanly shifts

whereby it might be hidden. These not succeeding, he put himself into the power of the unscrupulous Joab, and made him treacherously expose the unoffending but deeply injured Uriah to being slain in battle; and, alas! alas! the written command to Joab to commit this wickedness was sent by the hand of the brave, the faithful Uriah himself! How indeed are the mighty fallen!

Can it be possible that the doer of such foul unmanly deeds was the generous David, who had twice spared the life of his persecuting enemy, Saul; the man with the poet's soul and the musician's heart? Instead of thinking only of David's fall, let us think of our own danger, our own insecurity against similar sins unless momentarily upheld by the hand of GOD.

There is this also to be remembered—that David did his poor best for the woman whom he had wronged, in the most grievous of all ways in which a man can wrong a woman; that he married her, and exalted her to much earthly honour, choosing, years afterwards, one of her sons to be his successor as king, thereby securing her in great honour and dignity all the days of her life, it being the Eastern custom to give especial precedence to the mother of the reigning sovereign. In so far, at least, David acted with more generosity and manliness than do those so-called men who, having made playthings of women for the indulgence of

their own evil passions, throw them aside when their temporary gratification is past, and leave them to bear the consequences of that wicked selfishness unhonoured, unloved, uncared for.

God did not leave David unrebuked; He loved him far too well to allow him to sin with impunity. By the message of one of his own appointed ministers He brought him to a sense of his sin, and to confession thereof. Nathan, the prophet of the LORD, adapted his reproof to the poetical, imaginative nature of the king; he told him an allegory so pathetic, so poetical, that its words have passed into proverbs—so that the “one little ewe lamb” that “was unto him as a daughter”—have become household quotations, familiar in palace and in cottage.

The tenderness of GOD's heart was especially grieved by this sin of David, who had ever hitherto shown himself a tender-hearted man; and you may be assured, young men, that there is no sin which so shocks the tenderness of GOD's heart as any irreverent wrong done to womanhood, GOD Himself being in the FLESH, born of woman; even as there is no sin that more outrages His honour than any sin against the body which God the SON condescended to assume, and which, by His having taken, and by His still wearing, has been sanctified as “the temple of the HOLY GHOST.”

David's repentance was as vigorous as his sin was

energetic and determined. He had not sinned indifferently, nor in a lukewarm fashion, and he did not repent indifferently, nor in a lukewarm way; and, as I said before, some of the words wherewith his agonised repentance was poured forth before the LORD, are a precious legacy for all members of the Church of CHRIST: for each and every sin is hateful unto GOD, and for each we need to say,

*"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."*

David's sin was great, but so also was his punishment. Will those men who are only too willing to sin with David be willing to share David's chastisements? GOD did indeed pardon him, but it was long before He restored unto him the "joy of His salvation." David was never again the glad-hearted, bright-souled enthusiast.

How could he be, when heavy judgments came upon him one after another? The loss of his sons, the wickedness of their conduct, his family disgraces and humiliations, the constant warfare in which the country was engaged, and GOD's refusal to permit him to build Him a Temple, were indeed heavy punishments for his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah, and for his disobedience in numbering the people of Israel, and were sufficient to cloud and damp his former gaiety and brightness of heart and manner. Yet he never lost his confidence in GOD, never forgot

his childlike dependence upon Him, and could sing with full assurance, "I wait for the LORD ; my soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The LORD hath chastened me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death."

Towards the close of his life of seventy years, even his justly deserved chastisements were alleviated, and in great measure withdrawn, so that his last days were days of peace, and of bright looking forward to the promised prosperity of Solomon's reign, and to the building of the Temple, the materials for which he delighted in getting ready, for the remarkable unselfishness of his nature, obscured only once by *as remarkable selfishness* in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, never showed itself more strikingly than in his innocent, almost childlike pleasure in accumulating materials for a Temple which he himself was not to have the honour and joy of building. Let us hear his own words, spoken in the full assemblage of the leaders and chiefs of his people a short time before his death.

"As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our GOD, and had made ready for the building. But GOD said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for My Name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast

shed blood. Howbeit the LORD GOD of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel. . . . He liked me to make me king over all Israel; and of all my sons, for the LORD hath given me many sons, He hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne. And He said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build My house and My courts."

To that son David then turned, and gave him many directions as to his conduct in building the LORD's house, and also patterns that he, David, had been given by the SPIRIT, of the courts of the House of the LORD, and of all the precious, dedicated things.

Speaking again to the congregation, David said, "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my GOD, the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood, onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance." He then asked for gifts for the future Temple, saying, "Who is willing to fill his hand this day unto the LORD?"

In answer to this appeal the princes and captains and rulers offered willingly rich and bounteous gifts; whereat David the king rejoiced with great joy, and

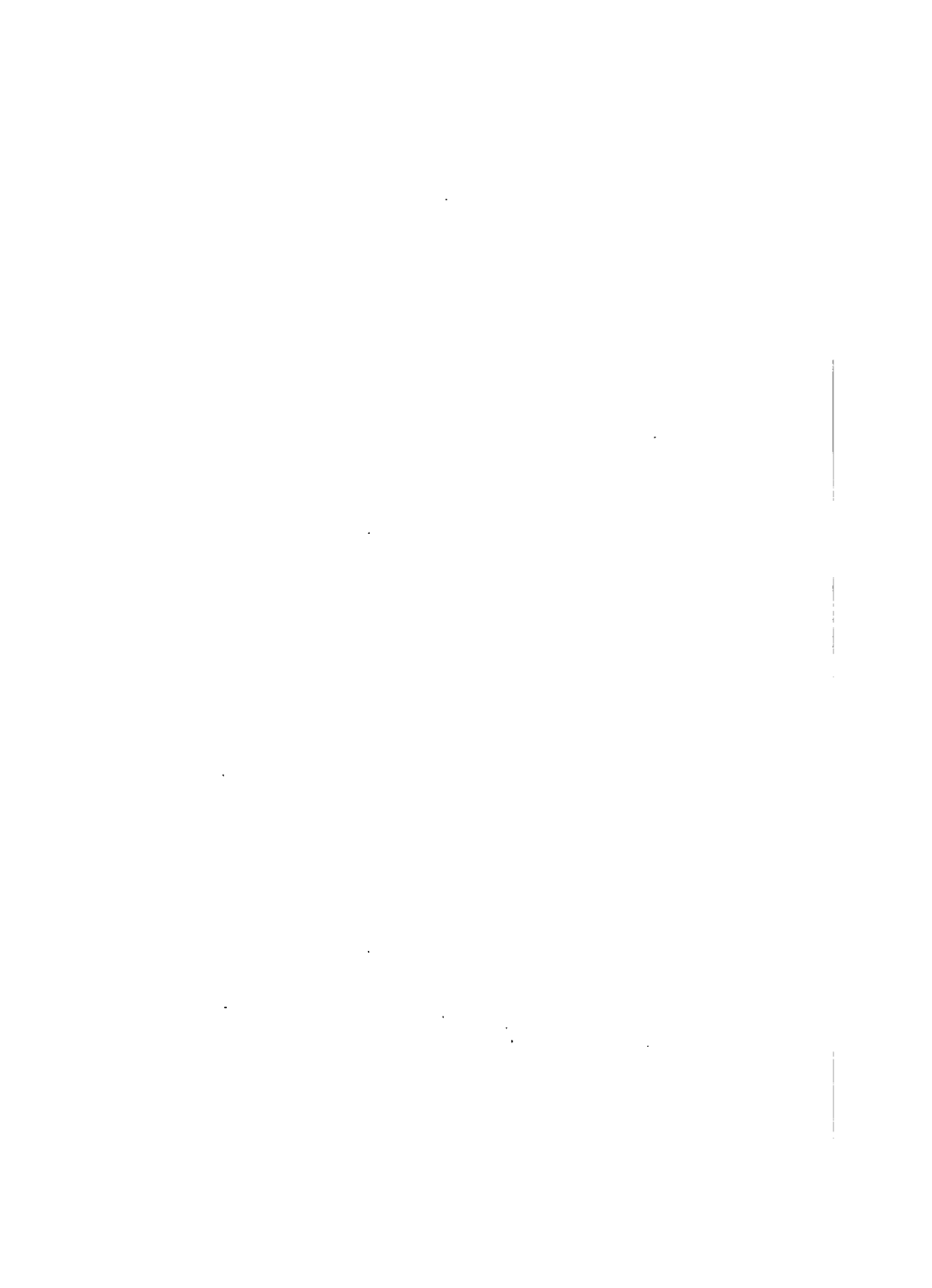
taking the gifts, he offered them unto the LORD in those beautiful words, as musical in their sound as they are spiritual in their sense, with which our beloved Scottish Church to this day offers to God the gifts of her faithful children.

Then great sacrifices were offered up unto God, and there was eating and drinking with great gladness before the LORD, Solomon being anointed before the people as his father's successor, and Zadok anointed as High Priest, David composing his last psalm for the use of the sanctuary, namely, that noble one which is numbered in our Bible as the seventy-second, and which closes with the words, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

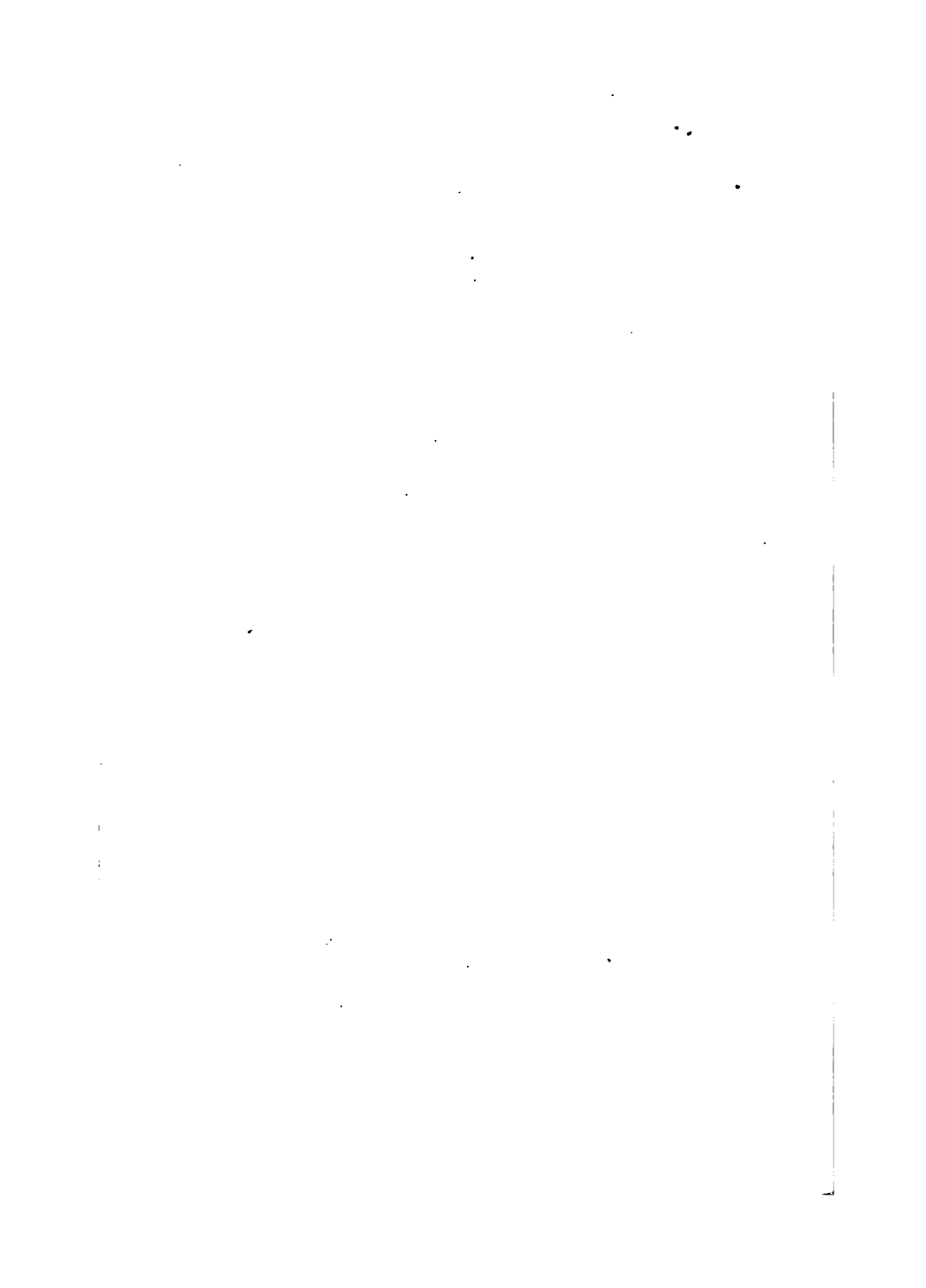
Was not this a bright ending to the public life of David? After a brilliant morning and a clouded, shadowy noontide, for him was abundantly fulfilled the promise, "At eventide it shall be light."

For him there was "clear shining after rain." Penitence had done its perfect work, and he could say, "I will lay me down in peace and sleep. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, O LORD, Thou God of truth." Who can doubt that at the resurrection morn he shall find the sure and glad fulfilment of his own faithful and hopeful words—

"When I wake up in Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it"?



TALK XIV.



*SOLOMON.**FALLING FROM A HIGH ESTATE.*

AMONGST all the histories of Old Testament men whose characters come before us chiefly in the light of warning, there is not one more sorrowful, more painfully suggestive of degradation and failure than is that of Solomon, Saul's even not excepted; because Solomon was greater in his beginning than Saul, and his fall being from a greater height, was a more terrible warning, a more sorrowful spectacle.

Solomon had every advantage that, at that period of the world's history, a man could have had; he was of royal birth, born and cradled in luxury; destined from infancy to be his father's successor on the throne; beautiful in person, gifted in mind far above and beyond even the mighty gifted of his own and other realms; wise in all branches and varieties of secular wisdom and knowledge; the owner of almost fabulous wealth (in his day "silver was as the stones of the street"); revered and admired by contemporary sovereigns; king of a securely established kingdom, and untroubled by wars. What of

earthly blessing and privilege could he have had that he had not? What either of spiritual blessings that he really wished to have would have been denied to him?

He began life in the full glory of God's love and favour, and basked, as it were, in the brilliance of temporal, mental, and spiritual sunlight; there was scarcely a shadow on his path; and yet, he so abused all the resources of intellectual and material pleasure that he ended his life, which was not a long one, barely reaching to sixty years, with the bitter, hopeless confession, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity; all is emptiness and vexation of spirit."

Contrast the circumstances of his life with those of the life of Joseph. Joseph at seventeen years of age was driven a lonely exile, deeply humiliated, and shorn of his outer raiment, from his father's house, from home and friends, and sold to be a slave. He was afterwards imprisoned upon false charges; his feet "hurt in the stocks," his goodly person ill-used and wounded; and yet, under these and many other trials, he so clave to his God, and so faithfully obeyed His commandments, that even his enemies were made to be at peace with him, and he could say to the brethren who had been the human instruments and cause of his troubles, "Ye thought evil against me, but GOD meant it unto good, to bring to

pass as it is this day, to save much people alive." There was in Joseph a deep spirituality, a fervent trust in God, whereas in Solomon there was always a stronger love of intellectual than of spiritual gifts.

Even at the outset of his reign, when God told him to ask of Him what he would, he did not ask, as his father David would have done, that his heart might be filled with the love of God and the knowledge of God, but he asked for intellectual gifts, practical sagacity, clear intelligence, quick discernment to see the right from the wrong amidst all the deceit and treachery which make the office of a ruler or judge of an Oriental people one of exceeding difficulty.

He asked good things, but he did not ask enough: he asked for what would make him a wise king, not what would make him a loving and faithful-hearted servant and child of God. His head was amply stored, but his heart was emptier than that of an untaught peasant; and in this aspect of his character he is a terrible warning to people of this day; for secular knowledge seems to be ever growing in beauty and clearness, and yet the love of many grows cold.

It is possible to know a great deal about religion and to have but little religion itself. You may be sure that I do not mean to cast any slight upon the

acquisition of secular knowledge. For its increase we have all much cause to be thankful ; yet, if we go no farther than mere secular knowledge, nay, than even mere critical literal knowledge of the very Bible itself, we shall be as empty of heart as Solomon, and have to say in bitterness of spirit, "Vanity of vanities ; all is vanity."

One of the many points in which Solomon is to us as a warning was his preference for intellectual to spiritual gifts, his pursuit of head rather than of heart knowledge ; and we have the more reason to be warned against a similar preference on our own part by seeing that all his intellectual gifts, all his secular wisdom, did not keep him from gross sins of the flesh, from contemptible self-indulgence ; nay, more, did not suffice to keep him from intellectual sins, from sins of the head as well as sins of the body ; for although his keen intellect must have utterly despised the false religions and the horrible idolatries of his wives, yet, in spite of this intellectual contempt for them, what heart he had was turned away from God unto them, insomuch that he planted groves and built a temple for the worship of Moloch, "the horrid king," and for Ashtoreth, the moon-goddess of the Sidonians. It has been considered that there was a sharply ironical meaning intended to be conveyed by the last items in the list of commodities brought home

for Solomon by his trading ships ; these are " apes and peacocks."

At the beginning of his reign his desire was to make everything tributary to GOD and to His glory. " His wisdom, wealth, and commerce were consecrated to GOD's honour and service, and to the enrichment of GOD's Temple ; but now, at its close, we find that great wealth had brought with it effeminacy and a frivolous, vainglorious love of novel and outlandish things, useless though they were for any sensible purposes ; objects merely to please the eye and the fancy, and intended probably for the amusement of the idle hours of his numerous wives and concubines." Strange indeed that the wisest amongst men, the intellectually great Solomon, should descend to glorying in the possession of the silliest amongst beasts and the vainest amongst birds !

Thus then, the worldliness of Solomon's heart is as another beacon-light of warning ; a worldliness which became, as it almost always does, the mother of hardness and cruelty of heart ; for in his later days, he who had in his early youth asked for an understanding mind to judge the people rightly, oppressed that people so greatly, that immediately on his son's accession we hear of a protest against the heavy yoke of Solomon, and against the whips with which he chastised the people.

But there remains yet another lurid light of warning in the character and conduct of Solomon, and that is his choice of evil companions and associates. He who might have had for his friends the wisest and best in his own and other lands, deliberately chose as his closest and dearest associates, not only vain and frivolous, but also heathen women; and the natural result of such companionship was the leading of his heart astray from God.

If we also choose to make friends and companions of men and women who do not fear GOD and obey His law, we also will have our hearts led astray, first, into forgetfulness of GOD and indifference towards Him, and afterwards into the service and worship of the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

A downward course has small beginnings, but it has a great and terrible ending. If a young man's chosen companion is one who is indifferent to religion, the young man's first step in the downward road will be the keeping away from one of the public church services of GOD's holy day in order to enjoy his company; by and by he will begin to read his friend's evil books; later on, to agree with his friend's evil thoughts; and at last, following his evil example, he will not only hardly ever come to church at all, but he will waste his substance with riotous living, and build temples to the service of an idol more horrid and more tyrannical than even Moloch "the

horrid king," namely, the Devil, the great and cruel enemy of souls. Beware then of thoughtless, irreligious, and unbelieving companions, for they will assuredly lead your hearts astray, even as Solomon's heart was led astray by his evil and idolatrous wives and concubines.

I cannot ask you to follow me in tracing the actual history of Solomon's life, as we have been in the habit of tracing that of each of the other characters of whom we have spoken, because it was comparatively uneventful, and had, in fact, but little history, as far as outward events make a life's history. He had no adventures, no hairbreadth escapes, as had his father David; no great and grievous sorrows, as had Jacob, and Samuel, and others of whom we have talked together: he was a sagacious statesman, an eloquent writer, a ripe scholar, a polished man of letters, and a despotic monarch; but to be all these was compatible with a quiet, stay-at-home life, undisturbed by storms or outward calamities; and the Bible does not give us any detailed account of his inner life.

We see him always, as it were, from the outside; we hear of no sorrowful struggles against sin, no bitter bursts of anguished repentance, and in this very silence there is a terribly suggestive meaning. Probably there were no struggles, and consequently no anguished repentance; worldliness so

hardened and deadened and corroded his heart, that at the last there was left no heart wherewith to repent.

The great event of his reign was the building of the Temple, the materials for which had to a great extent been gathered together by his father David. I wish that it were within the plan of these talks to go into a detailed account of that magnificent building; but I hope that you either are already, or will make yourselves, well acquainted with the details of its splendour and glory, and that you will try to learn the typical and symbolical teaching to be derived from its very construction and arrangements, and from the various articles of its furniture. I would just briefly call your attention to a few remarkable facts.

The Temple was formed of *three* compartments—the porch, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies; each of the three sides was flanked by an aisle or lean-to, formed of three storeys equal in height, and the Holy of Holies was of three equal dimensions, that is, a perfect cube. Have we not herein mysterious foreshadowings of the great doctrine preached by the Church of CHRIST at every one of her public services and in every baptism which she administers, the doctrine of the ever-blessed and undivided TRINITY? The three side-storeys were made to communicate with each other in a remarkable, and, for

Oriental buildings, an unusual manner. We are told "the door for the middle chamber was in the right side of the house, and they went up with winding stairs into the middle chamber, and out of the middle into the third. Thus we learn that the staircase was not, as in most Eastern houses, on the outside, but in the interior; and concerning this, a learned commentator and bishop says, "Might not this *inner* communion of the one storey with the other by a winding staircase typify the hidden and mysterious intercommunion of the Three Persons of the Divine TRINITY with each other; and also, might it not represent the spiritual" (and always unseen) "ascent of the soul, with which the devout believer mounts, by the communion and indwelling of GOD the HOLY GHOST, through GOD the SON to GOD the FATHER, the summit as the origin of all life, and light, and love?"

"Once more, you remember the great 'molten sea,' that is, a huge circular brazen bath for the priests to wash in; it was one and entire, and was the type of the cleansing efficacy of CHRIST'S Blood, the application of which is administered once in the one baptism for the remission of original sin." But beside the molten sea there were ten lavers for the cleansing of the sacrifices, and they represent the continual application of the precious blood to individual souls in repentance,

confession, and absolution of actual individual sins. The position of these lavers on each side of the altar suggests the duty of cleansing every sacrifice before offering it to God; the solidity of the supports of these lavers—they stood on bases of brass—and the great care taken in their workmanship, appear to represent the duty of a sound faith, the steady assurance which the truly penitent sinner should have of full loving pardon through the cleansing of CHRIST'S most precious Blood. Each laver contained forty baths, thus bringing forth recollections of the forty days' rain in the Flood, the forty years' trial time in the wilderness, the forty days of humiliation under the insults and taunts of Goliath, the forty days' given to Nineveh for repentance, the forty days fast of Moses, of Elias, and of CHRIST; and to many appearing to symbolise the need of continual perseverance in self-mortification and disciplinary humiliation for sin. "Furthermore, these ten lavers were on wheels, and could be moved from one place to another; and in this respect they may perhaps be regarded as an emblem of the Divine eagerness in love, ever hastening to be gracious, like the father in the parable, running to meet the returning prodigal; and they may figure to us the Divine compassion seeking to save that which is lost, and sending forth messages of invitation into all places of the world."

* These are but a few of the many deep spiritual lessons and mystical meanings of the various parts of the Temple built by Solomon; and it would be well worth your while to make yourselves acquainted with them all. But now, in drawing this talk to an end, let me beg you to learn from the character and conduct of Solomon that the circumstances of our lives are ours to use or to abuse exactly as we choose, and that as the best and brightest worldly circumstances will not *of themselves* make us good and holy men and women, so neither need the most painful and most tryingly difficult circumstances make us sinful and unfaithful. Jacob and Joseph had trials and adversities, so also had Moses and Samuel; and they used their trials and difficulties to bring themselves nearer to God, and by their means trained themselves in holiness of life.

Esau had the advantage of the birthright, of being born the elder son, and he wilfully cast it from him. Solomon had every advantage and blessing that could make the service of God light and joyous, every means of becoming a saint of God granted to him, and he abused or neglected every one of those opportunities and advantages, thereby proving to us that God will not save us against our own will.

He has "called us into a state of salvation,"

and placed us at our baptism where we may and can be saved; but from that shelter, from that place of refuge, we can, if we choose to obey the Devil, depart, either for a time or for the whole of our lives. GOD has given us the inheritance of saints; He has made us heirs of a kingdom eternal in the heavens; but *if we choose*, we can forfeit that inheritance; we can throw it away, as Esau threw away his birthright, and as Solomon forfeited for his descendants much of the glory and honour of the earthly inheritance which he himself had received from his father David. GOD said to Solomon, "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away *all the kingdom*, but will give one tribe to thy son for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, which I have chosen." *

Did Solomon ultimately repent and turn unto the LORD? Who can tell? The Bible does not give us any information on that point, and the silence is awful and impressive. Many of the Fathers of the

* 1 Kings xi. 11-13.

Christian Church fear that he had become too utterly worldly to be even capable of heart-felt repentance, and that he had so seared his conscience that he could not look below the intellectual; outer aspect of any matter.

It is even too probable that he was able to analyse even his own character and conduct from the outside as he could analyse and judge those of other people, for he describes what was certainly too like his own case in terribly pregnant words when he speaks of those who forsake the guide of their youth and forget the covenant of their GOD. He talks of being "holden with the cords of sin" and going to the house that inclineth to death. His utterances in Ecclesiastes seem to be those of one who regretted the punishment of sin rather than sin itself—of one who despised the ugliness of sin rather than one who hated and abhorred its sinfulness; there is more of bitterness than of repentant sorrow, more of outraged self-respect than of true humility; more regret for his own abasement than sorrow for having wounded and grieved his GOD. But his ultimate state must be left by us in the silence wherein GOD has left it, taking to ourselves the warning, and remembering how awful it is to know that GOD may use men as instruments of good to other men; that His SPIRIT may teach them, and through them teach others, and

yet that they themselves may at the last fail of the prize of their high calling.

St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, knew well this terrible danger; he knew that GOD will not save any man against that man's own will and choice; he knew that knowledge puffeth up, and therefore he, intellectually great and gifted as he was, used his intellect for the enrichment and spiritualisation of his heart; nay, more, he kept his body in subjection, bringing every member into captivity to the law of CHRIST, lest at any time he might prove a castaway. He understood well that the body must be governed, and that every sin of the body must be restrained and sharply corrected, in order that the soul may live, and therefore he acted upon that knowledge. Solomon also knew those facts with his head, and yet nevertheless he allowed his body to drag him into a slough of sensual indulgence, and the keen-eyed, learned man wallowed in wickedness common to the unlearned beasts—a wickedness worse than theirs, because they *are* unlearned, and know not what they do.

With so terrible a warning before us, let us take heed unto ourselves, and “exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of us be “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” and lest, “having a promise of entering into rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.” Let us labour

therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." And how may we be surely and safely kept from falling? This also does the Apostle tell us.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, JESUS the SON of GOD, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

TALK XV.

FOUR KINGS.

FALLING FROM GRACE — FALLING AND RISING — BLESSED
CONVERSION—GOING ON FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH.

It would be difficult to trace from whence came the mistaken and sometimes fatally dangerous theory that a man once called of GOD, once His adopted child and avowed servant, cannot possibly fall away from that blessed state of adoption and loving servitude. Certainly it did not come from the Bible, for that has many a sorrowful record of good beginnings and bad endings, though also—thanks be to the Love which alone has made such possible—it has many records of bad beginnings and good endings, together with many stories of the risings again after falls; of struggling onwards and upwards through thorny and stony paths; of generously given gains replacing sorrowful losses; of glorious victories following seeming conquests, and of the rich rewards for “faithfulness unto death.”

I propose that in our talk together to-night we should speak of four kings, each of whom may be taken as a type or representative of a distinct phase or state of mental and moral being. *Joash*, whose beginning

was good, and whose end was evil. *Hezekiah*, good alike in beginning and end, but having falls from which he arose; faults and failings which he confessed and overcame. *Manasseh*, whose early years were years of open rebellion and gross sinfulness, but who, under the merciful training of affliction and adversity, repented of his wickedness and "gat him right humbly to his God," who heard his earnest supplication and healed him, so that for him came "the clear shining after rain," the joy of pardon, the bliss of conversion to newness of life.

Last of the group is *Josiah*, who began at sixteen years old to love and serve the LORD, and who continued to love and serve Him during all the remaining twenty-seven years of his short life. Of him it could truly be said that "in a short time he fulfilled a long time." He was as another Joseph, showing us how possible is human goodness, and how a mortal man may become like unto GOD by living and moving and having his being in GOD, and by making His law his constant delight.

There is a piety that is like unto the "morning cloud and the early dew," so soon passeth it away and it is gone. It is merely the effect of training, and comes simply as the effect of association with the good and excellent, and is no matter of free, deliberate choice. Of such a nature was the piety of the youthful Joash, the first of our characters of whom we shall

talk together. At eight years old he was put upon the throne of Judah by Jehoiada, the high priest; after having been hidden by him and his wife Jehoshabeath for six years in the Temple, and thus defended from the rage of the wicked, usurping Queen Athaliah, his own aunt, who had mercilessly put to death all upon whom she could lay hands of the "seed royal of the house of Judah." When the proper moment came, Jehoiada, calling to his aid the captains and rulers of Judah, executed righteous vengeance upon Athaliah, and slew her, and put Joash, the rightful heir, upon the throne.

The story is a stirring one, and well worth your interested reading if you do not already know it. It so stirred and excited the richly gifted mind of the great musician Mendelssohn that one of the finest of his minor compositions grew out of the interest he felt therein, and the "war-march of the priests" in the sacred cantata of "Athalia" is familiar to all lovers of music. Jehoiada was a servant of the Most High God, and under his training and guidance the child-king "did that which was right in the sight of the LORD," throwing down the temples of the idols and re-establishing the pure worship of the one true God.

I will continue the story in the Bible words.*
"But Jehoiada waxed old and was full of days, . . .

* 2 Chron. xxiv. 15-26.

an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. . . . Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king : then the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house of the LORD GOD of their fathers, and served groves and idols ; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD ; and they testified against them, but they would not give ear. And the SPIRIT of GOD came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith GOD, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper ? Because ye have forsaken the LORD, He hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king. . . . Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. . . . And it came to pass at the end of the year that the host of Syria came up against him, and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people. . . . And the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand. . . . So they executed judgment against Joash. And when they were departed from him, for they left him in great diseases, his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest,

and slew him on his bed, and he died, and they buried him in the city of David; but they buried him *not* in the sepulchres of the kings."

A sad record, is it not? And is there in it no lesson for each of you—for every modern Christian? Consider the privileges that Joash had: his early childhood was passed in the sacred precincts of the Temple, and both in childhood and youth he was trained and guided by a righteous man, the chief priest of the Most High God; and for a time he did run well, helping to re-establish the worship of God and giving of his own wealth for the promotion of God's glory and honour. Yet he forgot all his early training, and deliberately set himself to learn a false religion: he hardened his heart so that he became both ungrateful and cruel.

God gave him chances of amendment; He "sent prophets to him, to bring him again unto the LORD, and he would *not give* ear unto them." He sent to him the godly son of his own old benefactor and friend, the son of the man who had saved his life when he was a helpless infant; and instead of listening to his advice and to his warnings, Joash commanded that he should be stoned to death.

According to our capacity, and within the limits of the restraints of modern civilised society, do we not partake of Joash's sin? You too were trained in Christian principles and brought into covenant,

with God; you are at present obliged, as it were, to lead a religious life; but is there no fear lest, when the restraints of a carefully guarded youth shall be gradually loosed, you will let them slip away without building up any for yourselves? May you not gradually grow careless, first about one religious observance and then another? You cannot set up graven images on your walls to worship them, but may you not set up idols in your heart—love of pleasure, love of money, vanity, unlawful affection, and the like? And when God's priests speak warningly to you, though you cannot, like Joash, command them to be stoned, may you not, like Joash, turn a deaf ear to all their warnings, and persist in hurrying on to destruction?

Depend upon it Joash did not go to the bad all at once; neither does any man who has been trained from childhood in the fear and worship of God. Joash first left off giving to the sanctuary, then going to the sanctuary; then he set up idol-temples; next he worshipped the idols; following thereupon was his neglect of all warning and reproof; and at last these evil acts culminated in sacrilegious and peculiarly ungrateful murder.

You too may begin your downward course by lessening your attendances at God's Altar, then at other public services of the Church; you may lessen your zeal in working for God, so that you leave off

teaching His little ones in the Sunday-school, leave off leading His praises in the choir ; then by degrees you may go on to neglect of private Bible-reading and private prayer ; the reading of evil books and delight in evil society cannot be long of coming ; and at last, all restraint may be thrown aside, and you, who began well, may become a reprobate ; you, who cannot remember when you first lisped a prayer at your mother's knee, may become a prayerless, God-forgetting, God-defying sinner.

May become ! God in His infinite mercy grant that you *do not* become such an one ; and you *will not* if you put your sure trust in Him who is able and willing to keep you from falling, and if you guard, day by day and hour by hour, against the small beginnings of evil. But let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall ; and do not flatter yourselves that you, any more than Joash, can begin to sin with impunity.

Sin gathers sin to itself, as a rolled snowball gathers snow, and the smallest permitted and unrepented sin is the parent of another sin. Therefore beware, and remember that the little child brought up in the Temple of God died at the age of thirty-nine, a murderer, an idolater, and an outcast from God and man.

Let us turn our thoughts to the pleasanter and more comforting contemplation of what may be

called a fair type of the devout modern Christian which we find in the character of Hezekiah, who began to reign over Judah when he was five-and-twenty years old. He also began well, and that of his own deliberate choice ; he was not ashamed to consecrate the flower of his youth, the prime of his manhood to GOD.

“In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them ; and he brought in the priests and the Levites,” and after having asked them,—who were the fitting persons for such a work,—to give him advice and help and countenance, he sent messengers throughout all Israel as well as Judah to invite the people to return to GOD and to come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover.

Amongst the Israelites the message was treated with much contempt ; still many of them came, not only from Ephraim and Manasseh, but from the distant tribes of Issachar, Zebulun, and Asher, to unite with the men of Judah, to whom GOD had given one heart to obey Him.

It was a wonderful time. These visitors, we are told, “humbled themselves,” and the priests, who had been too slow to sanctify themselves, grew ashamed with the holy shame that bringeth grace and glory, and, following the example of the Levites who had been more “upright in heart to sanctify themselves,”

hasted to fulfil all the requirements whereby they could be purified, and render themselves able to bring the burnt-offerings into the house of the LORD. We hear also that there were many in the congregation and of the strange visitors who had not had time to carry out all the ceremonies of cleansing themselves, and the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers (that means, the paschal lambs) for every one that was not ceremonially clean, and for all such Hezekiah prayed, saying, "The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek GOD, the LORD GOD of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary,"—a prayer that has given comfort to many and many a devout soul in the Christian Church, and one which GOD is as willing to answer now as He was then, and has ever been.

This Passover feast was prolonged to fourteen days by the express wish of the people, and "there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem."

But they did not content themselves even with holy gladness. When their jubilant worship was finished, its results were seen in their going forth through the cities of Judah to break in pieces the images, to cut down the groves, and to throw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in

Ephraim also, and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all.

One proof of wonderful wisdom mingled with Hezekiah's zeal against idolatry deserves to be especially mentioned. The brazen serpent, which Moses had lifted up in the wilderness, had long been an object of worship, not only as the memorial of a great deliverance, but too probably in connection with the serpent-worship prevalent in the East. Hezekiah broke it in pieces like any other idol, and spoke of it as a piece of brass. Then that done, the king set himself to order and arrange all the courses of the priests and Levites for the proper administration of the Temple services, and he re-established the giving of tithes unto the LORD, which had been suffered to fall into disuse. "Thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the LORD his GOD. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of GOD, and in the law and in the commandments, to seek his GOD, he did it *with all his heart*, and prospered."

With *all his heart*; that was the secret of the prospering; half-hearted service is of little use or blessing to either the giver of the service or to the one to whom it is given; and if this be true as regards the affairs of our worldly calling, how much more true it is with respect to our spiritual business; in *that*

lukewarmness is an abomination unto the LORD ! Hezekiah had sorrows and anxieties in temporal matters.

He rightfully refused to continue to pay tribute to the king of Assyria ; therefore that king came against him with a mighty army. Hezekiah in this emergency acted not only as a godly, but also as a cautious, worldly-wise man. He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains and the brooks, saying, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?" Also he strengthened all his defences, and built up his strong walls, and set captains of war over the people, and "gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous ; be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him ; for there be more with us than with him : with him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our GOD, to help us and to fight our battles." "And the people *rested themselves* upon the words of Hezekiah." "A word in season, how good it is !"

Remember that you may do much good by wise, thoughtful, and above all, kindly words. Remember, also, that many and many a human soul may suffer great loss here, and hereafter, for want of a good word that you might have spoken. When Senna-

cherib came to the very gates of Jerusalem and sent an insulting letter to Hezekiah, even then Hezekiah did not lose courage.

He went into the house of the LORD, and spread the letter before the LORD, and prayed; also he entreated the prayers of the prophet Isaiah; and you know the result. "The LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. . . . Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

Again was Hezekiah visited by sorrow, and this time of a more strictly personal nature: "he fell sick to death," and he did not wish to die. He thought, doubtless, of all his great unfinished work, and of the dangers impending over Judah. He was still young, and still—so we gather from Josephus—unmarried. His desire for life was strong, and he prayed earnestly unto the LORD, who answered his prayer, and granted him fifteen years more of life. In every emergency he went to his GOD; but he did not go only when he was in trouble. He was a man of prayer, and therefore all went well with him. Often our moments of highest exaltation prove those of greatest temptation.

A great saint of the Christian Church said once that "Satan and his angels are always most busy over souls that have just been receiving the LORD in

Holy Communion;" and so in the hour of Hezekiah's great deliverance came his great temptation.

Messengers came from the king of Babylon to inquire about the wonderful astronomical sign which God had given in proof of his determination to prolong his life; and in an ostentatious spirit he displayed to them all his treasures and his precious things. It does not seem a great sin, but the motive, known only to GOD, must have been sinful; for we are told that "his heart was lifted up." He fell into the sin of pride, and GOD loved him too well to suffer him thus to sin. He had tried him by the coming of those messengers that He might know all that was in his heart, and finding pride and self-glorification there, His wrath fell upon him and his people. "But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and his people, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

This will teach you what to do when you have yielded to temptation and fallen into any kind of sin, whether of the heart or of the outward life. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of GOD. Confess your sins unto Him, and He will grant you pardon and peace.

It is supposed that Hezekiah married shortly after his illness; at any rate, his son and heir was only

twelve years old at the time of his father's death, and was, alas ! not such a one as his father.

"Manasseh did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen. . . . For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim and made groves. . . . And he caused his children to pass through the fire to Moloch; he dealt with familiar spirits and wizards, and he set a carved image in the house of God."

And all these iniquities were not committed without warning. "The LORD spake to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken." The king attempted to silence the prophets by fierce persecution: "he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood;" and tradition says that he caused the aged Isaiah to be martyred by being sawn asunder. GOD would not suffer such wickedness: "He brought the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon."

And when he was in affliction he besought the LORD his GOD, and humbled himself greatly before the GOD of his fathers, and prayed unto Him. This prayer of the repentant king forms one of the books of the Apocrypha, those of which our Church says in her sixth article, that "they are read

for example of life and instruction of manners." Therefore I earnestly recommend you to study this prayer of penitence, so that you may use its petitions when you too find that you have sinned and long earnestly to return to your God.

He says, "Thou, O LORD, according to Thy great goodness, hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against Thee, and of Thine infinite mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners that they may be saved. . . . I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. I am bowed down with many iron bands. . . I have provoked Thy wrath, and done evil before Thee. I did not Thy will, neither kept I Thy commandments. Now, therefore, I bow the knees of my heart, beseeching Thee of grace. I have sinned, O LORD, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities. Wherefore I humbly beseech Thee, forgive me, O LORD. Forgive me, and destroy me not with my iniquities. Thou art the GOD of them that repent, and in me Thou wilt show all Thy goodness; for Thou wilt save me that am unworthy, according to Thy great mercy."

And GOD did hear him, and did save him, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. His repentance did not end in sorrow and confession; it had the third and most valuable mark of a true repentance—*reparation*. He turned from

the evil of his ways; he took away the strange gods, and the idols out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built, and cast them out of the city. . . . And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD GOD of Israel."

This story is full of comfort to all who truly repent them of sin, and who are willing to give proofs to GOD and man of their repentance; to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. Remember whoso hath been "forgiven much" should "love much;" and love that stops short at words is no love. The words of affection and kindness are good and pleasant, but it is the deeds of love that live, and that can really testify the depth of the repentance. Leave off all the practices which your conscience and your elder friends and guides tell you are wrong, and take all good and holy practices which you see it possible for you to do, not caring whether they are difficult and painful, but only that they are good, and that they will be loved and valued by the LORD, Who thought no sacrifice too great to make for you, Who bought you even with His own most precious blood, Who died, and now liveth for you.

Josiah had a bad father; Amon, the son of Manasseh, did evil in the sight of the LORD, and, we are told, "did not humble himself before the LORD as

Manasseh his father hath done." He was so wicked and cruel that his people conspired against him, slew him, and put his little son on the throne.

Josiah, like Joash, the first of our group, was only eight years old when he began to reign; but, unlike Joash, he was not brought up in godly ways and under pious training. So terribly evil were the influences of his father's court, that we are told that it was in his sixteenth year that he began to *seek after* the GOD of David his father.

No doubt, some of the priests yet to be found in the land, Zephaniah and Jeremiah, the contemporary prophets, aided and encouraged him; but much of his outward work had to be done by himself. At the age of twenty he made a progress not only throughout Judah, but also in some parts of Israel—the parts not entirely laid waste at the taking away of the ten tribes into captivity, which had occurred, as you know, in the year B.C. 721, when the kingdom of Israel, founded by Jeroboam, had come to an end. Wherever the young king went, he went as the enemy of idolatry: he threw down the altars, and the statues, and the groves; the images were ground to powder, and the dust sprinkled on the groves of the worshippers, and this zealous work occupied six years.

When he returned to Jerusalem, a most wonderful thing occurred,—an event, the full force of which it

is difficult for us, who have always had an open Bible, to realise. Hilkiash, the High Priest, found the sacred copy of the Law, which had been lost and forgotten for years, and he read it to the king.

Imagine if you can the scene. You know the denunciations against disobedience and idolatry that are in that Law, and try to realise what the godly young king felt on hearing of the judgments to which his people had by their many ages of wickedness exposed themselves. No wonder that he rent his clothes, and could not rest till he found a prophet to explain those terrible denunciations.

For the first time since the days of Deborah, we meet with a prophetess, Huldah, the wife of the keeper of the sacred vestments, who lived in a suburb, or the lower city of Jerusalem. Josiah sent the priests to consult her, and her reply confirmed his worst fears for the ultimate fate of the city and the kingdom; but she gave a message of personal comfort to the king. Because he had a "tender heart," and had humbled himself before God, he should not see the evil that was ere long to come on Jerusalem and Judah.

Josiah redoubled all his efforts to promote goodness amongst his subjects, and standing up in the midst of them, he made a solemn covenant to walk after the LORD, and to keep His statutes with all his heart and with all his soul; and all his days

the people departed not from following the LORD, the GOD of their fathers.

Necho, king of Egypt, came against Josiah, and that brave king went out to do him battle, and there offered up his life for his country,—a sorrowful and a noble ending of a sorrowful and noble life; for it *was* a sorrowful life, one weighed down and clouded by the sins and iniquities of others.

And yet surely, with all its pain and sorrowfulness, it was a life that any one worthy of the name of man would not willingly refuse—a life of conflict against evil, of care for the souls of others, and tendance of his own soul that he might serve the LORD perfectly, and keep himself pure and unspotted in the midst of an evil and perverse generation.

He was a young man; will not you young men try to imitate him? He had difficulties which you have not; he had to seek the LORD, to study to know His will, which you have not to do; for you have heard of Him, and have known His law all your lives.

More than all, the CHRIST JESUS, whom Josiah could see but in type and symbol, is with you and in you—your Brother, your Friend; and thus you are blessed immeasurably more than he was; and yet do you love that living LORD as well as did

Josiah who saw Him but through the mist of type and shadow ?

Do you seek this newer rite, wherein He gives Himself into your hands and your heart, as zealously and eagerly as Josiah sought to see Him in the bloody sacrifices of the Temple ?

A better goodness than that of Josiah *may* be yours ; you have the indwelling SPIRIT of GOD to guide you, and you dare not say that you cannot serve the LORD, you, with your privileges of baptism, confirmation, and oft-repeated communions, your open Bibles, your Christian priests and services, your godly friends and wise books, when that young, half-taught Jew could serve GOD under difficulties such as you have never even imagined, and could keep His covenant to walk after the LORD faithfully unto death.

TALK XVI.



THE THREE CHILDREN AND DANIEL.

SELF-DENIAL IN SMALL THINGS A TRAINING FOR GREAT
WORK.

AFTER the early death of the zealous and godly Josiah, the kingdom of Judah progressed rapidly to the destruction which, centuries before, the SPIRIT of GOD had foretold would be the inevitable punishment of its many grievous sins, especially of its most grievous sin, the oft-repeated falling into idolatry.

In the reign of Jehoiakim the kingdom was in vassalage to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, who carried away to his great city most of the royal and ecclesiastical treasures of Jerusalem, and also several goodly youths of royal and noble blood, and excelling in personal beauty and mental accomplishments, in order that they might be trained in all the learning of Chaldea and brought up as ornaments of his court.

A little later Nebuchadnezzar made another raid, and took away Jehoiachin, or Coniah, and his mother, and ten thousand of the people of the land. He appointed Mattaniah, whose name was changed to Zede-

kiah, as his vassal king over the wretched remnant of Judah; but this Zedekiah being unfaithful and treacherous, after a nominal reign of eleven years was dethroned, and, with the remainder of his people, taken to Babylon.

This terrible event happened B.C. 586; and you know that for seventy years after Judah lay desolate, the land keeping "the sabbatical years" of which it had been unlawfully and rebelliously deprived; and you are also aware that after those seventy years the Jewish exiles were permitted by Cyrus (who had conquered Babylon and made it subject to Persia) to take possession of their own land and to rebuild Jerusalem.

Of the great event of the return to Judah we shall speak hereafter when we talk together of Ezra and Nehemiah; but at present our thoughts are to be occupied with some of the earliest captives, those who were carried away in the reign of Jehoiakim, and who never returned to their native land; namely, the four young men known to us as Daniel, Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, and who are described as "children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science."* These were taken away from Judah only three years after the death of Josiah, and it is possible that they

* Daniel i. 4.

had been his chosen associates and courtiers, and that they had learnt through him and from him their fear and love of the one true GOD, the GOD of Israel. All four belonged to the tribe of Judah, and they may have been brothers, or, at any rate, near cousins. They were certainly close friends, and sharers of each others' thoughts and feelings, though Daniel was the chief spokesman, and probably the originator of the good deeds in which all four took part ; for we are told that "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor the wine which he drank ;" and then he asked for himself and his friends from the prince of the eunuchs the favour of being permitted to abstain altogether from meat and wine, and to eat only vegetable food.

Daniel's reasons for this request were that the heathen king's meat, before being taken to the king's table, had been offered to idols, and also that it "had been killed with the blood," and, most important reason of all, that GOD's commandment with regard to such a matter was plain and positive :

"And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood, I will even set My face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. . . . No soul of

you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. . . . Whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.”*

Try to realise to yourselves the difficulty and pain involved in this resolution of Daniel and his friends. They were captives in a strange land, and all their chance of comfort, nay, of the very preservation of their lives, lay in submission to the commands, and even the wishes, of their conquerors and masters; also they were young, and young people (indeed, people of all ages) like and enjoy having nice pleasant food and dainty dishes.

The food offered to these young men was of a highly superior kind, all the delicacies of a great monarch’s table, and to refuse all these persistently, day after day, meal after meal, entailed upon those who refused them more self-denial than we perhaps like to think it did; for no one likes to acknowledge a preference for good eating, or to confess that the continual deprivation of good savoury food would be a real, genuine trial. And yet, nevertheless, it would be such to the wisest and most intellectual, the least “carnally-minded” amongst us; painful most of all to the young; so I think that there is much to be admired, and even revered, in the constant self-repression and self-denial of those young men, even though they were exercised about

* Lev. xvii. 10, 12, 14.

what the intellectual part of our being would like to consider a very small matter, namely, the matter of daily bodily food.

The self-denial of those young Jewish captives, though self-imposed, was not self-devised. Many of the mortifications of even good people are self-devised, and the result of self-will; people too often originate and devise modes of disciplining themselves with, no doubt, the best of motives; but, notwithstanding the goodness of the motives, this self-devised discipline can never be so wholesome, so altogether excellent, as that which is exercised by the direct command of GOD, as was the daily self-denial of Daniel and his companions. GOD had given a plain command to all of their race (and, indeed, to all other people who might be under the control and authority of that race), that they should abstain from eating food that had been "offered to idols," and animals that had been "killed with the blood in them;" and though that command clashed with the command of those young men's earthly king, they knew that GOD, rather than man, must be obeyed in any case wherein GOD and man stood in opposition, the one to the other.

This is one of the points wherein the example of those young men of a far-distant age may be of infinite use to us. Let us first be very sure that GOD has given a direct command upon any matter,

and then, once sure of that, obey it, at all costs, at all risks. We need not set ourselves up as martyrs, and act in opposition to all around us, unless there be a good and sufficient reason for so doing; and the revealed will of GOD concerning any matter is an all-sufficient reason for steady resistance of even a prevailing fashion.

Let us name some examples of what I mean. We need not (except occasionally for some private personal self-discipline) refuse to enter into pleasant and festive scenes and social amusements; but there are certain seasons which the Church has appointed for times of retirement from social gaiety and amusement. Now, the Church is either the "spouse of CHRIST," or she is not; either she is the guardian and mouthpiece of the will of GOD, or she is not; those who are without her pale may consider that she is not; but you have been brought up to believe, or at any rate to express the belief, that she is the spouse of CHRIST and the revealer of GOD's will, therefore to you has been given a plain command which should be obeyed as implicitly as Daniel and the three children obeyed that which they found in the written statutes of their Jewish Church.

Again, when you are lawfully in the midst of festive scenes, you are not commanded to wear solemn, long faces, and to speak grave, solemn words; but, because GOD has said plainly—"Swear not at all; let no

corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, neither filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which is not convenient;" *you are bound* to refrain from the slightest approach to such words, even though the refraining may entail upon you the ridicule of less godly persons. Because GOD has plainly said—"Be not partakers with unbelievers, nor with the children of disobedience;" *you are bound*, whenever the possibility of choice is yours, to abstain from going amongst such persons, and certainly from making them your intimate friends, however sociable, pleasant, and agreeable they may be; and though not associating with them, may entail the loss of some worldly and social advantages.

Again, you of the Christian Catholic Church are not bound (save by some temporary vow taken to benefit other persons, or to teach self-denial to yourself) to refuse to partake of any strong drinks; but because you are commanded "not to be drunk with wine," nay more, "not to be given to wine," *you are bound* to be at all times moderate and careful in the use of intoxicating liquors, lest by any chance you might drink "to excess," and by unseemly "riot" deface and defile your "bodies, which are the temples of the HOLY GHOST."

Depend upon it, the necessity for self-control in obeying any plain command and law of GOD is as great now as it was in the days of Daniel and the

three children. If we would "live godly," we must sometimes "suffer persecution," or, at any rate, inconvenience and discomfort in some form or other therefore, let us ever be ready, as brave men and women should be, to meet and uncomplainingly endure all inconvenience and hardship when once certain that we are simply doing our duty, and that which is required of us.

The ways in which those young men practised their earlier forms of self-denying obedience are suggestive of good lessons to us. As far as we know, they did not give the reasons for their conduct to the man set in authority over them. Silence is often more valuable than argument, but then it must be silence of speech, not of action ; action can be more eloquent than any words. When making their request, they asked to be put on trial, to be tried for a given time, whether the abstinence from meat and wine would or would not injure their health. Therein they showed great common-sense and judicious prudence ; they did not rush headlong into a perpetual vow ; they were willing to have their powers of obedience to their GOD tested by even worldly wisdom and judgment. But well do we know how they employed the time of their probation ; how earnestly they implored of GOD that their sacrifice might be found worthy, and they themselves worthy to offer it. Earnestly they asked GOD's

manifest help and approval, and in full measure both were granted unto them.

By the daily self-denial of refusing pleasant food were those men trained and prepared for the tremendous trial of their faith which came to them at a later period. By small things they were trained to meet a great emergency. Having day by day refused to eat the king's meat, they were the better enabled to refuse to fall down and worship the golden image which the king had set up, and were strengthened to go unflinchingly into the burning fiery furnace. Be very sure of this, that if we cannot refuse to eat of "the king's meat," we can never hope to endure the heat of the king's furnace, or, to speak plainly and practically and without metaphor, unless we train ourselves by small, daily self-denials, we cannot even hope to be able to make any great and heroic sacrifice for CHRIST, should the need for such ever occur to us.

You all know the wonderful way in which God helped those three children in the fiery furnace—the seven times heated furnace. For them He worked a great miracle, not for their sakes only, but also for yours and mine, in order that we too may know in Whom to place our trust in time of trouble. GOD may not choose to work the miracle of delivering us *from* any special danger or affliction, but if we believe in Him, and trust Him, He will work the

equally great miracles of making us resigned to the sorrow or danger, and of "supporting us *in* all trials, and carrying us *through* all temptations."

In connection with this comforting thought do not forget to take special notice of the Companion of the young men in the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? . . . Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the SON of GOD." *

Wondrous declaration of a heathen king. It was as an unconsciously uttered prophecy of Him who was, centuries later, to be born of a woman, and live in Human form upon the earth, of Whom in His dying agony another heathen, a Roman centurion, exclaimed, "Truly this man was the SON of GOD."

I may be allowed here to remind some of you whose studies will have led you to see the truth of the observation, that the idea of a GOD, or a Divine person, assuming human form was one perfectly acceptable to the heathen mind, for in all systems of ancient mythology such assumptions on the part of various deities find place. True, they are covered over with absurd and even foul inventions; yet, nevertheless, in the most absurd and unseemly of them Christians can read the unconscious "seeking

* Dan. iii. 24, 25.

after truth," and can trace fragments of the one true Faith, distorted versions of the promise given to the first woman—that of her race and lineage should spring the great conqueror of evil, and the Redeemer of mankind. In them all there was the grasping after the one central "mystery of godliness," the manifestation of "GOD in the FLESH." What the heathen mind (aye, what some minds amongst the Jews also) could not grasp, could not even conceive, was the fact that GOD could come in order to suffer and to die; to be "despised and rejected of men;" "the scorn and outcast of the people."

In the fact of the SON of GOD, the Second Person in the Divine TRINITY, being the Companion of the three children in the fiery furnace, we find another proof that GOD'S Church has been one body from the beginning of time until the present hour, but progressively exhibited under higher and nobler developments.

Not only did Abraham see "the day" of CHRIST and "was glad," not only did "David call JESUS LORD," but also did every faithful Israelite and Jew behold Him in the sacrifices and services of the Temple; and Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, being faithful Jews, who had realised Him even *without the visible sacrifices*, seeing Him through their spiritual invisible meaning, were privileged to have His very Presence in a temporary assumption of His lowly

and beautiful Humanity—to have Him Himself in visible form and substance to walk with them in the midst of the fiery furnace.

If He thus walked with them before being “born of a woman,” will He not also walk with you, after being thus born, and wearing His human form? Although you cannot see Him with the outward eye, can you not behold Him by faith, for you are members of His Church under its later and higher development, and are sacramentally united to Him? He may not keep the flames from scorching you, but He will assuredly take care that they shall do you no real *harm*; that is, that they shall not separate you from Him, which is the only real *harm* that can happen to the Christian who believes that all other things “work together for good to them that love God.”

Let us turn now to the history of Daniel alone, and trace it from the time of his refusal to eat the meat from the king’s table, unto the closing scenes of his life. Shortly after that refusal he seems to have attained to a different position in the court from that of his friends and fellow-captives. All of them were endowed by GOD with knowledge and wisdom; but to Daniel in particular was granted a singular amount of far-seeing wisdom, and of insight into dreams and visions.

The beginning of his worldly advancement was

similar to that of Joseph, it resulted from the faithful interpretation of the dream of a king; but there was a wondrous difference between the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and that of Pharaoh. Pharaoh's had reference to a near event of comparatively limited importance, whereas Nebuchadnezzar's embraced the mighty changes and revolutions of many lands in many future centuries. It would not be in accordance with the purpose of these talks of ours, that we should go into the subject of that dream, nor that we should study the other prophecies of Daniel. In past times, in a course of Sunday lessons, we went over some, at least, of the historical fulfilments of Daniel's prophecies. We traced the decline and fall of the Assyrian monarchy; the rise and decay of the Persian, Grecian, and Roman powers, and the gradual development of the ten leading nations of Christendom, as all these were foreseen under the symbolism of the gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay portions of the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and in "the four beasts" and "ten horns" of Daniel's own vision; but those lessons were, perforce, cursory and superficial, and I could not recommend to you a more profitable, and withal more pleasant, study than that of working out the historical fulfilments of many of Daniel's prophecies.

There can be few pages of secular history more interesting to intelligent, thoughtful young men than

those which embrace the life and exploits of Cyrus, "that best and noblest of heathen"—the regenerator and elevator, if not almost the actual founder of the Persian dynasty, symbolised in Nebuchadnezzar's dream by the silver breast and arms of the image, and in Daniel's own vision by the second of the four great beasts, the beast like unto a bear.

Amongst many others, there is one valuable result that should follow upon the tracing out of the evident fulfilment of any Biblical prophecies; and that one, as you will readily guess, is the confirmation of our faith. Perceiving that some long-foretold events did literally come to pass in due order of time, we should be the more ready and able to believe that all prophecy will, in God's good time, be fulfilled. The witness which secular history bears to the truth of the Bible is a witness for which we should give thanks, as a great aid to our own all too imperfect faith, and as a keen-edged weapon to wield in our warfare against the more pronounced unbelief of ungodly persons with whom we may be compelled to come in contact.

Some of you may perhaps have seen Sir Noel Paton's picture called "Faith and Reason." It is a truly wonderful conception of a Christian artist. A traveller, middle-aged, toil-worn, and weary, his face embrowned by the scorching heat of many suns—face, and hands, and feet alike scarred with many

scars, is represented pursuing his *upward* way in a wild, mountainous region, barren, heaped with rocks, full of chasms and pitfalls, and strewn with dangers, as such regions are. He stands with one foot firmly placed upon a great boulder rock; in front of him yawns a deep, dark chasm, but with his sword used as a staff, he feels for a rock whereon to plant the other foot, whilst his disengaged hand is held by a fair, spiritual being, from, and through whose person, irradiates a light that comes directly from the shining city far above the mountain top—a light that shows the next step in the path. Faith helps Reason to find a sure foothold, and Reason, though earnestly seeking such, clings to Faith's guiding hand.

Every evident fulfilment of prophecy, every historical witness to the literal truth of the Biblical records, is a sure foothold for Reason, if Reason will see it in the light thrown by Faith.

Now, in turning to contemplate the character and conduct of Daniel, we must speak chiefly of the practical lessons for your own life and conduct that may be derived therefrom.

Daniel was one who gave his heart to God early, in the first flush and bloom of youth, for it is generally believed that he was little more than fourteen years of age when he resolved not to defile himself with the meat that had the blood in it, and that had been offered to idols; *only fourteen* when he

resolutely entered upon a hard life of self-denial and self-restraint; and with him this piety was not as the morning cloud and early dew, it continued and abode within him as the dominant principle of his long life, and at eighty-five years of age we find him even more steadfast than in the days of his boyhood. The fires of youth still shed their glow over the vale of old age; the grand fervid enthusiasm of the boy was crystallised into the unflinching firmness of the aged man.

He saw many changes in the land of his captivity; one king succeeded to another; but under each and all he seems to have held a place of high honour. He was respected as men are who respect themselves, with the true respect born of the knowledge that they are the children of GOD; and even in the midst of a corrupt and licentious court, he was known alike for his goodness as for the wisdom and learning that won, at least, toleration for his goodness.

Daniel's acquisition of secular learning is a point in his character that should not be passed over by you young men. It matters little what your station may be; secular wisdom and knowledge can never be unprofitable, be the station what it may, and no reasonable opportunity of acquiring such should you suffer to pass by you neglected and unvalued. And why should you not do so?

Because all secular learning should, if properly regarded, help you to attain to greater heights of spiritual learning, and aid you to do nobler, better work for GOD in this lower life, and in all probability, in the life to come. "The man of GOD should be *perfect, thoroughly furnished,*" if he be ever to be of those "wise teachers" who "turn many to righteousness," who, the learned and intellectual Daniel whose life we are studying, tells us "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." It is a sad fact that more harm is done to the cause of true religion by foolish friends than by clever enemies; the utterances of a fool, even if they be well-intentioned utterances, often do much temporary harm.

Daniel lived to see that downfall of the great Assyrian monarchy which he had himself seen in prophetic visions, and in his old age there reigned over Chaldea, now a mere vassalage of Persia, a king whose real name was probably Astyages, and who had most likely been placed in command over Babylon by Cyrus, "the Bear," who had conquered it; but into the arguments and different opinions as to the name and authority of the person called in Scripture by the official title of Darius, it is certainly not my purpose to enter; it suffices for us to know that in Daniel's old age this representative of the all-conquering Persian dynasty was chief in command

at Babylon, and that he so greatly revered and honoured the aged seer as to excite the jealousy of the princes and leading men of the kingdom, and that they plotted together to bring Daniel into disgrace and disfavour.

It was a custom amongst the Medes and Persians that a law once made by the king could never be repealed, and therefore these people entrapped Darius into making a decree that for the space of thirty days no person in the kingdom should ask "any petition of any god or man save of the king only," and that the penalty for disobedience of this law would be the being cast into a den of lions.

Well had these wicked men gauged the character of Daniel; his lamp gave no uncertain light; his principles were as well known as his stately figure, and his hoary, venerable head were known in the Court and the Halls of Justice of Babylon.

"Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his GOD, as he did aforetime."

"As he did aforetime." I wish you particularly to mark that this solemn act of prayer with all its accompanying ritual was no new thing got up at the spur of the moment out of the reckless bravado that

makes some men rush upon death in any shape so only that they may be famous. Always, all through his long life, had Daniel pursued the practice of his childhood, the practice that he had learned in his native land (perhaps at the court of the godly Josiah), and had prayed three times a day, kneeling upon his knees, and having his eyes directed through the open windows of his chamber towards Jerusalem; and wherefore had he always done these things?

The reason for the number of his prayers you will find in Psalm lv. 17. "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud;" and his reason for looking towards Jerusalem is given to us in the eighth chapter of the first Book of Kings, wherein Solomon in his prayer of dedication of the Temple says, "If they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they have been carried captives, and pray unto Thee *toward* their land . . . the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name . . . then hear Thou their prayer."

It was then no bit of mere fancy ritual, this kneeling, looking towards Jerusalem; it was the command of GOD, who seems always to have seen fit to allow much of ritualistic form and ceremonial observance as the outward tokens of acceptable worship.

In his youth Daniel had contended for the principle of obedience, and refused to defile himself by a sin of commission. As he would not then perform an act

forbidden by GOD, so would he not now omit to fulfil a duty commanded by GOD, thereby showing the higher, fuller growth to which he had attained—the height of the saints of GOD; for though we ordinary Christians do grieve over our sins of commission, those sins concerning which GOD has said, “thou shalt not” do this or that thing, we seldom grieve as deeply over our sins of omission, of neglect of the acts of which GOD has said, “thou shalt” do this or that; and yet, the Church puts both classes of sins on one level, when in the General Confession we are taught to say, “We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.”

Daniel could have used his customary prayers and have observed his accustomed postures without opening his windows and without allowing men to know of his so doing; but, at that particular juncture, to have done thus would have been sinful; it would have been a participation in the insult offered to GOD.

It cannot be difficult for you to see the lesson for yourselves in this matter. You are bound, not only *not* to dishonour GOD, but also to do him honour. Not only should you “not steal,” but also you should “labour with your own hands to give to him that needeth.” You are bound to work for GOD, as well as being bound not to work for the devil. Some-

times you may be laughed at, scorned, and almost persecuted for your zeal and earnestness. What then? remember the burning fiery furnace, and the den of lions, and be assured that when men try to tease or laugh you out of your religious observances, you should then, more strictly than ever, "*do, as aforetime,*" fearing GOD rather than man.

GOD stopped the mouths of the fierce lions so that they hurt not his aged servant Daniel, and He will also take care that the tongues of men who try to tempt you to do evil shall in no wise hurt and destroy your souls, if you will but give no heed to their malicious wickedness, and pursue your righteous living as aforetime.

History repeats itself, and the Church of GOD is one unbroken whole from the creation of Adam until the present hour.

In Daniel we see a reprint of the life and character of Joseph, who lived on this earth more than a thousand years earlier; and in St. John, the beloved disciple, we find a likeness to Daniel, "the man greatly beloved,"—his predecessor by fifty decades of years. Why was Daniel "a man greatly beloved?" because he was faithful, righteous, and true, because he feared GOD, and because he loved Him more than he feared Him; also, because he was "a man of desires."

GOD loves with very especial love those who ask

much from Him, who are full of desire towards Him, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Daniel's desires were not for himself only; he interceded much for others—for his own nation, and his own land, and for all around him; and it seems from the way in which He has always answered such, that there are no prayers that GOD loves better than He loves intercessory prayers.

Young men, will you try to be like Daniel—to reproduce, at any rate in some degree, his lovely image in yourselves? You dare not say that you cannot do this. If Daniel served GOD, you also can serve Him; nay, it is far easier for you to do so than it was for him. As a mere boy, I might say a child, he was taken from his native land, and exposed to all the terribly corrupting, soul-defiling influences of a heathen court, with no elder friends to guide or help him. I know that you also have many temptations—that you can seldom walk abroad without hearing words and seeing sights that tend to evil rather than to good; but even the most ordinary study of ancient history will convince us of the truth of the statement made by learned students, that the corruptions and iniquities of the heathen courts and cities of ancient time were so vile and terrible as to be almost incomprehensible to us of these modern days.

Daniel lived in an atmosphere of moral corruption

and infamy ; and yet, by the grace of GOD helping him, kept himself not only negatively pure, but positively pure, righteous, and holy ; and can you then dare to say that you cannot live a godly life because of the evils that surround you ? As far as we can gather, Daniel had no outward religious privileges, and yet he prayed three times a day towards Jerusalem, kneeling in his own chamber ; and as for you, you have the sound of church bells often in your ears, you can often enter into the courts of the LORD'S house, and you have always within your reach the blessed Word of GOD. Many and many a privilege, many a rich blessing that he knew not of, is offered to you—nay, is oftentimes almost thrust into your ungrateful, reluctant hands. You may perhaps tell me that Daniel had the companionship of angels—of Gabriel and of the great prince Michael—and more than that, of the second Person in the Divine TRINITY, “One MAN clothed in fine linen, the voice of whose words was like the voice of a multitude.”

That is indeed true, but mark this : Daniel had visions of angels before he had the visions of the angels' LORD and King, and if he had rejected and despised the former, think you that he would have been blessed with the far grander vision ? Think you not that he could have been unbelieving, and so have lost such blessings altogether ? And have you

not more, much more, than the vision of the LORD ? You have His very indwelling Presence. Nay, more, you are part of Himself, bone of His bone, flesh of His FLESH ; and dare you then say that you cannot love and serve Him, and be His faithful soldier, and servant, and friend ?

You can say, as Daniel said, "There touched me One like the appearance of a man, and He has strengthened me." Only you can say much more—not "One like the *appearance* of a man," but a Man, *the MAN*, the very GOD-MAN hath touched me, and hath strengthened me !

You may fall over and over again ; nay, you will do so. Daniel tells you so : "And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white."

What matter all the trials, all the sorrows, all the temptations, if at last you are madé white ? Carry your thoughts on from Daniel the Beloved to John the Beloved, and hear him say, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment."

"Blessed is He that waiteth," said Daniel ; and St. John says,

*"Blessed are they that do His commandments,
that they may have a right to the tree of life,
and may enter in through the gates into the
city."*

TALK XVII.

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

FAITHFUL PRIEST—LOYAL AND ZEALOUS LAYMEN—
CONCLUDING REMARKS.

ALL of you know something of the life and doings of Ezra, the Jewish priest and scribe, who lived in Babylon at the court of the Persian monarch, Artaxerxes I.

A story more romantic (if so we may, in all reverence, venture to speak) than any romance spun out of the most imaginative of brains, is the story of Ezra setting forth to the help of the perplexed and distressed Jews, the descendants of those who about eighty years previously had gone up, under the leadership of Jeshua and Zerubbabel, from the land of Chaldea, wherein they had been captives seventy years, to rebuild and repopulate the waste places of Jerusalem. Although restored to their own country by the noble generosity of Cyrus, and further favoured by Darius Hystaspes, things had not gone altogether well with those reinstated Jews.

Envious Samaritans and discontented Persians had combined to thwart and annoy them; and the work of rebuilding Jerusalem, and of carrying out in full perfection and strict order the services of the Temple had

been suffered to languish ; worse than all, the Jews themselves had grown cold-hearted and indifferent, and had fallen anew into their old, besetting sin of intermarriage with the heathen nations around them, and in order "to help" and to remedy, to comfort and to purify, Ezra, true to his name, which signified "Helper," went out from Babylon to the land of Judea : and thus, he "occupied a place towards the end of the history of the old covenant, resembling in many respects that of Moses at the beginning." Like Moses, he was a born leader and commander ; and, also like him, he had prepared himself for his high office. No man could have been able to undertake and carry out such a work without the preparation of a lifetime.

By Ezra's actions *after* his call to his noble mission, we may judge of his actions *before* that call. He who "fasted and afflicted himself before GOD," and "besought the LORD," after the mighty Persian monarch had given him permission to begin his work, and had lavished gifts upon him, must have used such means of grace many and many a time before that edict went forth, and those munificent gifts were given.

Does he not himself tell us (there modestly speaking in the third person) that "he had *prepared* his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and *to do it*?" Did not the heathen Artaxerxes, after long ac-

quaintance with him, say that "the wisdom of his God (the God of the Jews) was in his hand?"

Is not Ezra's long and careful preparation of himself suggestively instructive to all of us who may be longing and desiring greatly to do some good work for our GOD, and the cause of His Church? but there are also other lessons for us to be learnt from the character and conduct of Ezra, and even from some of his recorded thoughts and words. On one especial thought and feeling of his, and his manner of expressing that feeling, I should wish you, for a brief space, to fix your thoughts.

He was a courageous man, a righteous man, one respected by his sovereign and by his fellow-citizens, and yet, at one period in his life, he felt ashamed; and the feeling of shame is not one that one naturally expects a well-living and highly respected man to feel. Why did Ezra feel shame? What does he say about it himself?

"I was *ashamed* to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen, to help us against the enemy in the way; because we had spoken unto the king, saying, 'The hand of our GOD is upon all them for good that seek Him;' . . . so we fasted and besought our GOD for this, and He was entreated of us."

Ezra had gone some way on his journey, and had come to a halt at the river of Ahava, probably the modern river Hit, a little to the east of Damascus,

and there he was joined by two hundred and twenty Nethinims, the lowest order of Levites. The dangers and difficulties of the way were increasing, and recalling his refusal of outward aid and protection from the Persian monarch, he besought God so to help and protect him and his followers that his glorying in his God might not prove vain.

He had been ashamed to ask the heathen king for the guidance and help of heathen soldiers because he had full trust in the one true God—the God of Israel. Shame, a feeling which the world despises, and which in some of its phases is despicable, can yet be in some of its aspects a holy, a noble, a courageous feeling. Ezra was ashamed to ask for the physical help of heathen men, trained soldiers though they were, because he knew that he and his company could have the protection of the “God of battles,”—the “King of kings,” the “Lord of Hosts,”—as old-time Israelites had often loved to name Him. More than a thousand years before Ezra, Caleb had said to his faint-hearted fellow-countrymen whom “shame” in its unholy aspect, its worst and most degrading phase, made “faint-hearted,” that they were well able to overcome their enemies, even though they were the giant-statured “sons of Anak.”

About five hundred years after the time of Ezra, the learned and intellectually great St. Paul said in

one of his bursts of holy zeal, "It were better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying void."

Mark the beautiful similarity in the feelings of the saints of GOD in all ages. Caleb, and Ezra, and St. Paul, separated from each other by centuries of years, was, each one of them, "ashamed" to put his trust in princes, or in any child of man, and was willing "to die" rather than that the honour of GOD should be sullied in the eyes of unbelieving men, and that righteous "glorying" in the mighty LORD should be "made void."

Are we nineteenth-century Christians actuated by the same spirit of holy shame as that which caused Ezra, the priest and scribe of the old Church, to shrink from asking for heathen warriors to defend the people of GOD against other heathen? Our many political compromises lead us to fear that sometimes, as a nation, we English do not feel ashamed to "ask for bands of soldiers and horsemen."

But it is not with political questions that we wish to deal, but rather with the spiritual, mystical interpretation of Ezra's words, an interpretation which each person may apply to himself individually. In fighting our spiritual enemies, do we fight them only with the weapons from the LORD's armoury, and are we honestly ashamed to seek our

means of defence from the world? Have we more trust in "worldly prudence," and "expediency," and "finesse" than in honest, outspoken reliance upon God?

Another lesson lies behind Ezra's words of holy shame. We can learn as much from what he did as from what he did not do. He did not ask of the heathen king the aid of heathen warriors; but he did gratefully accept the silver and gold of the monarch to whom the Jews were in political subjection, and he did value exceedingly the decrees and documents by which alone he could legally perform the material, visible parts of his high emprise. The spirit of submission to constituted authority evinced by this acceptance of the king's gifts and official documents, was indeed different from the spirit of anarchy and rebellion too perceptible at the present day, not only in nations, but in families and individuals; nay, even in the very Church of CHRIST.

The noblest trait in Ezra's noble character has yet to be dwelt upon in our thoughts. He who was "ashamed" to ask the Persian monarch for soldiers and horsemen, was not ashamed to bring his soul low before God. He who was too proud (with the holy pride that he calls shame) to ask any help from an arm of flesh that might reflect against the honour of his God, could humble himself with

abject humility at the feet of that GOD. He believed in the efficacy and value of fasting, for in the perfection of his obedience (obedience shown both to GOD and to man) there was no room for cavilling doubts as to the use and value of any appointed and prescribed means of grace. He knew full well that if he used not "the means," he could not honestly nor reasonably expect the "Grace."

How is it with us in this matter? Do the means sanctioned and sanctified by the usage of centuries, and above all by the command of GOD, seem to our enlightened, modern ideas, so small in themselves, and so humiliating to pride of intellect, that we are ashamed, with *unholy shame*, to use them? or, on the other hand, are we ashamed, with the shame of Ezra, to use the world's more brilliant weapons to defend us against those spiritual enemies that we meet in the road from the cradle to the grave, or rather, from the Babylon of our exile to the city of the Great King; the Jerusalem which is on high; the City of "Peace;" the Rest that remaineth for the people of GOD?

Ezra was full of holy zeal. He saw that in order to be a real, true helper of his countrymen, he must rebuke their sins, and cause them to reform the evil habits into which they had allowed themselves to fall.

Intermarriage with idolatrous nations had ever

been the root-sin of the Israelitish heart, and the fruitful parent of all the other sins that had caused their undoing. After the return of the remnant of the people from the Babylonish captivity, even that remnant fell again into the old sin, the former fatal mistake. Ezra's first care on coming amongst them was to impress them with the enormity of this besetting sin. The example of his public fasting and prayer led the rulers and chiefs of the nation to come forward and stand with him on the LORD'S side.

At their suggestion all the people assembled in Jerusalem on the twentieth day of the ninth month (answering to our December), B. C. 458, amidst a violent storm of rain; and having humbly confessed their sin, they at once set to work to put it away from them. All the strange wives were put away, including even those who had borne children, by the beginning of the new year, or what would answer to the end of our March, B.C. 457.

Thirteen years after these events the people of Judea were still in affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem was still broken down, and its gates unmended. Artaxerxes, the Persian monarch, had entered upon the twentieth year of his reign when these grievous tidings concerning Jerusalem reached the royal residence of Shushan, and once again Ezra took up his great work of helping his country-

men; but this time he does not occupy so prominent a position as on the former occasion. He now acts in concert with Nehemiah, who took the leading part in the new expedition.

To his character I now wish to draw your attention. Ezra was a priest, and some of you may therefore be disposed to think that he was bound to act as he did. His holy office constrained him, you think, to holy living and active working for God. Well, be it so; it certainly did increase his obligations, and did make him in a twofold sense the LORD's liegeman, GOD's pledged servant; but Nehemiah was a layman and a courtier. He was cupbearer to the Persian king. The office of cupbearer in ancient times was one of great responsibility and importance. It was also one of great temptation to vice and immorality. It was naturally conducive to idleness and self-indulgence; but Nehemiah did not allow it to lead him into such sins, or even to make him forget his own people and his father's house.

He was cupbearer to a heathen king, and yet he was at heart a servant of the living God, and a Jewish patriot. How then can you dare to imagine that you have no opportunities for serving your God and your country?

Nehemiah heard the sad tidings concerning his fatherland, and when he heard them he wept, and mourned, and fasted, and best of all, he prayed

before the God of heaven, and earnestly entreated that he might be allowed to go to the help of his distressed brethren. His very name meant the "Lord the Comforter;" and thinking, perhaps, of the beautiful meaning of his name, he longed to act up to it, and to be the bringer of comfort and help to those of his own race and lineage.

Now mark the fashion in which he set about the accomplishment of his wish; follow in your minds "the steps of his going." First, he prayed to God; secondly, he set about the performance of his customary duty to the king. Hitherto, this duty had been performed with cheerfulness and bright pleasantness of manner; but now, for the first time, he was sad in the presence of the king. How could it have been otherwise? severe fasting and earnest prayer *must* leave their outward as well as their inward marks. The king noticed the sadness and the chastened manner of his young cupbearer.

Nehemiah tells the story himself—"Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick. This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid." You see Nehemiah's patriotism cost him something. The Persian king was a despotic tyrant, as all the ancient heathen kings were, and Nehemiah had good reason to feel afraid of him; nevertheless, he at once told the true cause of his

grief. "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?"

The king saw plainly that some petition lay behind this statement, and said goodnaturedly, "For what dost thou make request?" On hearing this remark, Nehemiah "prayed to the God of heaven."

It is not always necessary to withdraw into the privacy of one's room, or to resort to the public sanctuary, in order to pray. At all times, and in all places, prayer can be made unto God; and probably this was not the first time in which the godly young layman had made of his own heart a veiled sanctuary for the worship of God, and had erected a little unseen temple in the very banqueting hall of the heathen king.

After having prayed, Nehemiah, with all the finished courtesy of a courtier (you know that courtesy means the manner belonging to or befitting a court), made to his earthly monarch his earnest request that he might be allowed to go to Judea, and "build the city of his fathers' sepulchres." The king, afraid that his favourite servant wished to leave him altogether, immediately asked how long he would be absent, and Nehemiah then set him a time; it was twelve years, at the end of which he promised to return to the court and its duties. Is

there not much to be learnt from all this history? much of true politeness, of obedience, and loyalty to the heavenly and to the earthly King.

Now let us follow the conduct of Nehemiah in rebuilding Jerusalem. Most of you remember the way in which the great work was carried on. Prayer consecrated every fresh beginning, and practical good sense went hand-in-hand with religious faith.

Each great and leading person, each householder, undertook "*to build over against his own house.*" This is indeed an example to all Church and social reformers and restorers. "Let every one look first to his own innermost heart and his own life, then to his own household and parish, and then to the Church at home and abroad." You know also that whilst they were engaged in building the city, the Jews were disturbed and harassed by enemies, and you know how they resisted the attacks of those enemies. "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." The spiritual lesson of this conduct has been wrought out for us in the beautiful hymn that we often use on Saints' Days.

" In Jerusalem below
They were workmen at Thy call ;
Each with one hand met the foe,
With the other built the wall."

The life of the Church at large, and of each individual member of the Church, is a life of warfare. "Every one is a soldier, and must also be a builder." Each Christian has to fight against Satan, and at the same time to be always building up his spiritual and intellectual life by taking in new stores of knowledge.

There is another point of interest that we ought to notice. The priests began the work of repairing the walls, and it was finished by the goldsmiths and merchants. We should let this teach us that the Church of God consists of priests and laymen, and that the Church is aided, not only by religious services, and by priestly ministrations, but also by worldly wealth. Spiritual riches and material riches are both useful, and both are accepted of God.

Nehemiah did his part as a godly layman the work that was lawful for him to do; then he stood by, whilst the priests did that which the laymen could not do. Now and again we hear of Ezra, and we gather that throughout Nehemiah's visit to Jerusalem he was his companion.

The walls being finished, and the gates hung, the people were at last ready to worship God in peace and security, and Ezra the priest appears in the midst of them in the street before the watergate. He takes the *Book of the Law*, and with signs and tokens of deep reverence opens it, and then, assisted in turn by scribes and Levites

(six of whom stood on his right hand and seven on his left), he read the book of the Law of God from morning to mid-day. Among the people were thirteen other ministers, who with the help of the Levites "caused the people to understand the Law." This is supposed to refer to a translation of what Ezra read in Hebrew, into the mixed Chaldee dialect, which had become the common tongue of the Jews during the Babylonish captivity.

Nehemiah had promised the king to return to Persia at the end of twelve years, and he kept his promise, as such a good man would be sure to do. It appears, however, that he had again to visit Judea in order to quell fresh disturbances and remedy new abuses which had grown up through the weakness of the high priest Eliashib.

We have not time to enter into the history of these sins and abuses. Suffice it for our purpose to say that Nehemiah corrected them with unflinching firmness and unsparing severity. He restored the due offering of tithes, and forbade the sale of Syrian merchandise on the Sabbath-day.

He was such a layman as all modern laymen will do well to imitate, widely different though the circumstances of their lives are from his. Do not let patriotism go out of fashion. Be wise, thoughtful, understanding patriots such as Nehemiah was. Let a just proportion of your worldly wealth

be given heartily and ungrudgingly to GOD, and to promoting the good of your fellow-men. Be loyal, obedient subjects of your king, as Nehemiah was, remembering always that loyalty must be a far pleasanter duty in your case than it could have been in his.

Strive to be as he was, the faithful keeper of a pledge and word. Give honour and reverence, as he did, to the priests and ministers of the Church, never unnecessarily working without them, and being also content to let them work without you, in cases where your interference would be only an unfitting intrusion. Above all, cultivate a deep piety of heart similar to his; begin, and continue, and end your actions with prayer, as did this godly young courtier of a heathen king. As far as we can gather from the Sacred Record, Nehemiah spent all his worldly wealth, as well as his bodily and mental energies, in the service of his country, and asked for no material earthly reward for this service. He did, however, ask a blessing from GOD; and asked it after this manner:

“Remember me, O my GOD, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my GOD, and for the offices thereof.”

And GOD did remember him “for good.” The book which was, at least partly, if not wholly, written by him, and which bears his name, forms

a part of the canon of the Holy Scriptures recognised by all branches of the Christian Church. His good deeds are still being remembered in every corner of the civilised Christian world; by you and by me, at this present moment, and by countless other hearers and readers of the Word of God.

Nehemiah's just, simple estimate of himself was no vain self-glorifying. He had worked with a willing heart, a busy brain, and active hands, for God, and he had full faith in God's merciful acceptance of his work.

Some of us have not this simple faith. A child who has done well some difficult task fully believes that his parent will be pleased. A man who shows kindness to a friend, and puts himself to trouble and inconvenience for that friend, expects to receive grateful, appreciative thanks. Is God less kind, less appreciative of painful self-denial and willing service than are human parents and friends?

We cannot but believe that He takes delight in every deed of kindness that He sees a man render to a neighbour; in every alms offered on one of His altars, and in every act of reverent worship of His own infinite greatness. If He hate sin, so also must He love the weakest effort after goodness; but whilst this faith cheers and encourages us, we must ever remember that it is His Love that accepts and values our offerings. Were He to look at us through

His justice only, the best and holiest amongst us would be but "vile earth and miserable sinners." The INCARNATE GOD views our humanity through His Redeeming LOVE; and knowing the infirmities and temptations of the flesh, loves and values every effort made by each one of His human brothers and sisters to overcome those temptations.

The good and the bad deeds of men live for ever. Have we not found that this is so, by our own remembrance (during those talks of ours) of the obedient faith of Abel, the selfishness of Lot, the self-surrender of Isaac, the purity of Joseph, the patriotism of Moses, and the vices and virtues of the various other people of whom we have talked together? We also may, or may not, live long in the remembrance of men, but we shall assuredly live in the mind of GOD; to be remembered "for good," or for evil. Ah! dear boys, look to it, I implore you, that you be not remembered for evil.

You have every privilege of the Christian Church; every chance, every opportunity of serving GOD faithfully, and of being accepted of Him—of being remembered for good.

Can we close these talks better than by repeating almost the closing words of the Old Testament, the beautiful, comforting words of the prophet Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Dispensations. In repeating them let us pray earnestly that their bright

and blessed promise may be fulfilled in each one of us who have, in these meetings, "spoken one to another:"—

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His Name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

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